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CAREER-FARING POLICY: THE USE OF GRAPHIC  
ELICITATION AND VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS TO  
ANALYSE LIFE COURSE NARRATIVES OF TEACHING  
ASSISTANTS IN PURSUIT OF A TEACHING CAREER.

JANE WORMALD

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Professional Doctor of Education.

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## Abstract

Unstable, expensive and complex routes for mature students in part-time higher education remain a barrier to hidden potential and talent that could serve to address current teacher shortages. This study assesses the effect of transient policies on inequities in access and success in the educational career routes of eight teaching assistants in pursuit of a teaching career, alongside celebration of their concomitant persistence and ingenuity. By employing Bourdieuan based Careership theory with the novel use of graphic elicitation and visual representation techniques, it introduces and enhances methods that draw out nuances affecting people in a variety of contexts at different times in the life course. The focused attention on temporal influences significantly enrich the life course narratives educed from the semi-structured interviews.

Findings indicate interrelationships in temporal, agentic, cultural and structural dimensions in the participants' ever-changing contexts. Consistencies were seen in socio-cultural dimensions, particularly through recognition, by managers, peers and family. Acknowledgement of their value, contribution and potential, supported their tenacity to reach their goal. Common challenges were in having to be constantly alert to risk factors: in the length of time to acquire qualifications, financial sustenance and work/life balance issues alongside expected financial gain, personal satisfaction and meeting of affective needs.

Results enabled by the novel methods, show findings that contribute to a call to enable stable yet flexible career routes to teaching that are designed for access across the life course. The research suggests that lowering the risk threshold of entry to teaching and raising the reward between investment and work/life balance requires policy makers to recognise diverse lifelong rights of entry to the profession.

Key terms: teaching assistants, Careership theory, graphic elicitation, graphic representation, life course, mature students, part-time higher education.

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### Overview

The central concerns in the thesis of this study were originally two-fold. First, in a quest to discover and understand how transient educational policies, interjected for short-term gain, directly affected those on new non-normative routes pursuing a career in education. This study identifies teaching assistants (TAs) who were in their early to mid-careers and wished to pursue an occupation in education as classroom teachers. Non-normative educational routes in this study are defined as alternative routes to the mainstream, so not as traditional, standardised, socially accepted timescales that are regulated, predictable, resourced and supported (Furstenberg, 2005). In this context, they are courses taken by those who did not progress to higher education (HE) as school leavers, rather they returned to HE as mature, part-time students whilst working. In this thesis, I use the evidence gathered from the participants' individual life stories to notice temporal effects, alongside a tracking of attendant influences of policy direction, to form an argument to support organisation of longer-term, flexible, accessible, alternative routes to and in HE. In doing so, I ultimately explore what needs to be understood to open doors to mature learners ready to engage in study, at various times in their life course.

The second area of interest in the research adds to a knowledge base on second-chance careers, specifically through the analysis of learning lives of TAs in the educational field. It is particularly pertinent at the current juncture, where there is a predicted shortage of teachers for the future (Sibieta, 2020), and growing concerns of the continued well-being and retention of existing staff. There are financial incentives to be introduced by 2022 (ibid), but not enough exploration of how to expose untapped potential and provide support for lifelong learning across the workforce.

The participants in this study had a shared aim to be class-room teachers despite the extant challenges they faced. Restrictions of opportunity related to gender, class and race, and were time sensitive. But these participants also showed that despite this, their success in HE was still possible. I ultimately argue that unwelcome or untimely life events (whether individually or societally constructed) should no longer

determine or pre-set career opportunities, but more expansive and inclusive lifelong HE options should be socially and politically embraced and resourced. Empirical evidence from these participants promised to offer insight to lived experiences that change over time and to propose a way to consider agency, policy and time as inter-related.

A third area of interest emerged as a methodological approach was explored. This was in the usefulness of an approach to inter-relate the structural, social and individual data by placing more attention on when changes in these relationships occur and how they alter over time. For this, I placed additional attention to temporal aspects of Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) both in gathering data and in analysis.

Having introduced the crux of central concerns underpinning the study, I next commence a reflexive contextualisation of the issues that these concerns raised to explain its personal and societal relevance.

### **Reflexive contextualisation**

As a teacher educator in HE, I have seen support staff in educational environments facing considerable challenges dealing with the impact of perpetual change in educational policies and concurrently have marvelled how some managed to steer their way, despite often very arduous conditions.

In order to understand the educational experiences of my participants, it is important to contextualise their position in the field. I do this through a critically reflexive lens (see p, 37) in order to understand the relationships between structure, agency and social change (Dyke et al, 2012) and by employing the self-reflections by the participants as a critical tool (Lara, 1998). The study focuses specifically on the learning lives and educational experiences of eight TAs accessing entry level HE as mature students between 2006 and 2010 in England in an era of unprecedented involvement and intervention in education from the government. I was interested in identifying influencing factors that could challenge barriers and enable the conditions to support success for second-chance lifelong learning in educational fields. These TAs took various and vacarious routes to become teachers, first encouraged and recruited by various signposting for future careers, then needing their full powers to

navigate persistent changes in both policy and powerful life experiences to reach their desired destination.

Academic qualifications are valued currency in attainment and gateways to professional level jobs; if missed at the first opportunity it has bearing and repercussions on individuals' chances in securing certain types of employment. The catalyst for this study was hearing from former TAs about how they came to be 'successful' in their route and why they ultimately achieved, despite tarnished experiences at school and their subsequent unfulfilled early work lives. A critique of the political project for 'standards in education' in England is already well argued by a number of authors as being unconcerned with the actual educational needs of students, rather is associated with neoliberal competition and broader globalisation targets (Reay, 2017a). When school pupils do not meet the 'pass' criteria at school leaving age, there are very time-consuming and challenging options to then accumulate the required qualifications to even attempt to avoid 'glass' or 'class' ceilings in career progression (Friedman et al, 2015; Friedman and Laurison, 2020). The glass ceiling is mostly understood through the unexplained gaps in income and status related to gender and race. The class ceiling is associated with class related inequality. This study analyses evidence from eight women, who having embarked on their careers found that barriers to career progression were soon reached through different combinations of glass and class ceiling effects. That is, challenges to their progression were influenced by combinations of gender, class or race related inequalities as well as determined by their level or lack of very specific types of qualification. Accepted currency in the marketplace for entry to full-time HE is traditionally gathered at a specific period in time in school/college life and it becomes more difficult and costly when this is accessed at other times in the life course. This makes non-normative routes to HE limited because of these pre-set social expectations. Acceptance of mature students to HE is still largely based on what was demonstrated at the age of 16 and 18 and therefore not necessarily accounting enough for latent potential, assiduousness or current demonstrations of intelligence. Concurrently, the narratives of these participants highlighted extensive, non-monetary labour in and out of work, often related to motherhood and family responsibilities. At a time in their lives where a return to full-time education was financially not an option, various new non-normative routes to educational and teaching posts were introduced by the Blair government and accessed by my

participants, for a time. With change of government, the routes disappeared beneath them; these routes are discussed further below but ultimately became the way these participants described as making something of themselves.

Much work covered in widening participation studies in HE has been largely focused on the school-leaver age group. The numbers participating in HE has increased for full-time students, but there is relatively little evidence of the effects of widening participation on part-time, mature students, nor how these have changed over time for this group. Much literature focuses on the highest achievers at school leaving age, who are disadvantaged by class, race and gender in entering and achieving at the elite 'redbrick' universities and by subsequent challenges in climbing the career ladder, particularly near the top. This study examined 'ordinary' women navigating extraordinary challenges in a system that lays the responsibility on them to prove their achievement, and in doing so analyses the costs and benefits to themselves, their families and society.

To place the study in an English context, the next sections describe the changing role of the TA in England since 1997 and the purpose of FDs. I then outline factors that have had impact on education in the context of a market economy.

### **Policy context for teaching assistants and Foundation degrees**

1997 heralded the New Labour years and attention being brought by the government's headlining of education (Blair, 1996). The introduction of the National Childcare Strategy was in 1998 and in the same year the Graduate Teaching Programme (GTP) including Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) began, which meant reaching teacher status was achievable whilst working in schools. The first of my participants to become a TA was in 2002 after starting childminding at home and becoming involved with the local school.

There are a number of types of assistants in education: classroom assistant (CA) tends to be a general non-teaching assistant in the classroom, except in Scotland where CAs are generally used as TAs are in the rest of the UK. Teacher assistant or teaching assistant (TA) usually refers to support for a particular teacher and learning support assistants (LTAs) mostly relates to one-to-one support for individuals with

special educational needs (SEN). There is some cross over in titles that makes the identification of role remain inconsistent. In the United States, the phrase 'para-professionals' is the non-specific, cover-all name used, however, in England there was no such associated clear pay structure, professional development plan or professional body for TAs (Watkinson, 2002).

The 2002 Workforce Remodelling initiative 'Time for Standards' was a three-year plan by the Labour government to reduce teachers' workload by introducing more TAs in schools. The participants in this study became TAs between 2002 and 2008, six of the eight participants became involved because of their own children at school starting age; they became familiar with that environment being chief care givers, taking and bringing children between home and school.

FDs were launched in 2001, after being introduced by the education secretary David Blunkett (2000) and were equivalent to the Level 5 higher national diploma qualification. A new body, 'Foundation Degree Forward', supported the development of the programmes with the intention of modernising qualifications, engaging employers in HE and opening opportunity to widen participation in the sector, as well as reducing shortages in associate professional and high technical skills areas (DfES, 2004). Teaching and research professionals were identified in the top ten job opportunity occupation predictions for 2002 -2012 in Working Futures (Wilson et al, 2004). However, the Taskforce Report to Ministers soon identified that there was 'some entrenched opposition to Foundation degrees' (DfES, 2004, p.5) from employers and within the HE sector and therefore not being accepted readily. Criticisms implied there had been a definite lack of care when designing and marketing FDs, which served to maintain negative views on the value of vocational degrees compared to academic degrees (Gibbs, 2002a). In addition, schools were under severe financial constraints, despite budget increases that were absorbed by future pay rises and covering existing shortfalls, which had a negative effect on some schools' ability to employ additional classroom assistants. This kind of caution resulted in part-time employment accounting for the majority of TA jobs available (Wilson et al, 2006). It is significant that the increase in salaries in the sector had generally begun to attract more male applicants, but the part-time nature of TA work still attracted a more flexible female workforce. The greatest growth was predicted for the higher professions, with some benefit in the associate professional occupations, such as TAs (ibid). Predictions for a greater rise in professional

occupations, a 61% increase by 2014 (ibid) offered an incentive to be part of that workforce.

By 2008, there were just over 87,000 people enrolled on FDs in twenty-five subjects in the UK (Ooms et al, 2012). The government's target of 50% of young people attending HE by 2010 (BBC News, 1999) encouraged access to HE. However, the government limitation on University student numbers after 2009 eventually had impact on the offer and take up of FDs in Universities, with some Universities responding by converting FD provision to first degree courses. Between 2009 and 2013 there was a 40% drop across the board in admissions to FDs (Verinder, 2015). In education, the professionalisation of the support-based educators resulted in a highly skilful workforce and an intermediate entry route to HE, yet there was no professional *progression* route for individuals to the teaching profession. Once again, an obstacle was reached for TAs. The vocationally orientated emphasis of the FDs was intended to 'break the traditional pattern of demand' (DfES, 2003a), but ultimately struggled to be recognised by employers or supported by government. Research identified individual gains in studying FDs to be positive, but that employer recognition of the degree was poor (Ooms et al, 2012; Woolhouse & Dunne, 2009). The end point qualification was at level 5, as opposed to the level 6 of an Honours Degree, which meant a further two years part-time study for completion to degree level (or 'top-up') that was recognised for potential progression out of the low paid support role. The participants in this study entered the FD qualification with the promise of one subsequent year in teacher training to become a teacher. However, graduates with European qualifications (Bologna Declaration, 1999) already exited at a higher level and UK Universities needed to compete. The Higher Education Act (2004) did not help mature or mid-career students by maintaining a focus on traditional young, full-time students entering HE at 18 years old and perpetuating and reinforcing the dominant undergraduate qualification routes. In addition, FDs were vocationally based and unlikely to find the kind of purchase necessary in competition with traditionally academic routes that are regarded so highly.

The influences of a market economy rode roughshod over the less accessible routes, as the next section explains. However, before that, with some optimism, interest in the value and potential of TAs has been reignited in new work from Bovill et al (2019) in their Transforming Lives project. Their study employed an ecological

model to explore agency, structure and context by analysing three dimensions of agency and using figured world theory. Through their analysis of three differing case studies, they suggested that 'conducive circumstances' (p.2) could activate agency in TAs, who were seen as an 'untapped resource' (p.2), whilst also attending to the current and prospective teacher shortage. However, not all FDs are the same: Herrera et al's (2013) research found the value of FDs to be positive in personal development for a health-related course, although specialist work related skills and knowledge were limited. This suggests that effective resource to this area, consistent with associated educational policy, could help resolve this gap in provision and, as Bovill et al (2019) proposed, enable a route for TAs to reach teacher status.

The analysis of the data collected in this study has to be understood in its political and social context, which includes paying attention to the progressively ardent neo-liberal influences on the economy over the timescale in the study.

### **The market economy and education**

Whilst widening participation encouraged a broader range of entrants to HE, the definition of that diversity changed over time. McCaig's work (2018) identified five stages of marketisation that affected the term 'diversity' in the context of English HE by naming the 1990s from 1992 onwards as 'stage 2: diversity as good', followed by a period from 2003-2010 as 'stage 3: diversity becomes differentiation'. What this exemplifies is how diversity and widening participation in the 1990s purportedly had a human capital purpose, albeit being essentially aimed at both expanding and competing in a knowledge economy. By 2003 there was an even greater competitive distinction drawn with HE accountable to 'consumers' in league tables and quality measures such as the National Student Survey and Unistats. HE was encouraged to differentiate their offers to compete in the market for consumers. The distinction between HEIs would have been amplified by this approach, heightening the value of degrees at the upper end of the hierarchy. From 2010 -2015 following the Browne Review of HE (DBIS, 2010) and the introduction of the £9000 per annum fee hike, students were paying the same for differently perceived value of degree. This 4<sup>th</sup> stage era is what McCaig (2018) called 'competitive differentiation' with the market determining higher and lower demand based on status. With the fore mentioned



perception of FDs being at the lower end of the hierarchy of valued qualifications by employers, universities with eyes on the competition shifted their repertoire away from the FDs.

A sustained focus on increased individualism in this era, deflected responsibility away from the government. The working age population were made responsible for their own upskilling, which in turn was intended to support enterprise and competition (Hodkinson in Avis et al, 1996). Where this becomes relevant to this study is understanding the structural forces at play in the context in which the TAs in this study were operating.

The current supply of teachers in England is not meeting the demand (Coughlan, 2018) with 'severe' shortage predicted. There is concern about the wealth gap for qualified subject specialists, especially in geographical 'cold spots' and with increased class sizes, workload and accountability pressures (Borman and Dowling, 2017). See and Gorard (2019) called for a 'reconsideration' of approaches, away from policy that is led by reactive short-term goals and short-term economic solutions. They called for evaluations to assess the impact of a range of incentives and to promote joined-up policy across education. Where this understanding of context fits into the purpose of this study is in its potential to provide an insight into the lived experience of non-normative routes in lifelong learning and to feed into support for joined up policy making across social, economic and educational domains. This direction would aid the removal of barriers to 'wasted talent', a process which cannot be achieved in isolation. The Social Mobility Commission re-instated at the end of 2018, agreed that education policy alone cannot increase mobility and called for the removal of irrelevant requirements of some formal qualifications for career progression in managerial and educational contexts to develop a stronger and more diverse profession (Budoki and Goldthorpe, 2018).

Overall, the study gives an insight to a specific time that demonstrates how some individuals have been able to recognise, access and navigate uneven opportunity, but not without significant sacrifices and challenge. In order to explore the lived experiences of those wanting to contribute in the field of education, I needed to delve into two broad questions.

## **Research questions**

The central research questions were posed to eight participants who entered HE as TAs and who aspired to and/or achieved teacher status during this study.

1. How do TAs negotiate a career route to teacher status?
2. What factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path?

The participants' responses were collected in narrative reflections in two interviews and enriched by participant-generated graphic representations that were subsequently transcribed to a timeline to parallel each other.

Key educational/career/life course events were mapped to an educational policy timeline. Analysis of the interview transcripts with both researcher- and participant-led visual representations were examined through the lens of Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), in order to address and answer the research questions.

## **Contribution to the field**

This research further develops Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) with the use of visual graphic data collection and analysis in order to understand the educational and work experiences of these TAs across time. It raises the profile of the effect of the temporal and the impact of policy change and direction on life events.

This research contributes to:

- Knowledge of educational and career routes to teacher status by teaching assistants (TAs) entering HE with non-standard qualifications (Empirical).
- The enhancement of Careership theory, through the use of graphical data collection and analysis (Theoretical) to better understand effects of structure and agency over time (Conceptual).

## **Thesis structure**

This thesis is organised to first set the context of the study, then to identify existing literature relative to the thesis, discuss the approach and methods used and then moves on to discuss the findings, concepts and themes arising. It occurs in the following structure:

Chapter 1: Introduction. Introduces the purpose and aims of the research, identifying the central research questions and its intended contribution to the field. It sets the context for TAs and FDs in England and the influence of policy changes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This includes a review of context relevant policy documents and associated literature on part-time and mature students in HE in the UK, including research on career theories, life course narratives and injustices in education.

Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter identifies the approach and design of the study and introduces the central theoretical framework, Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). I introduce the research questions and establish the contribution that can be made to the field that this study ultimately realises. Ethical considerations are assayed, including my positionality.

Chapter 4: Data Collection. This chapter continues by justifying the approaches used, introducing the participants and examining the data collection methods of the semi-structured interviews with a participant- and researcher-led graphic elicitation and representation technique.

Chapter 5: Approach to data analysis. Here, the compatibility of the thematic data analysis and the process of analysis of the graphic data gathering techniques are explained. The Careership model is transposed to a useful tool for planning the analysis of the data across the set, introducing a temporal element for consideration.

Chapter 6: Findings: concepts and themes arising from the data are identified through evidence of shared enablers and restrictors to their educational and career routes. Careership theory is used to evaluate the impact of three areas i) their positioning in broad structural fields ii) the embodied influences that affect individuals and iii) their 'horizons for action' over time. The chapter concludes with key points and recommendations drawn from the data.

Conclusion: This final chapter confirms the importance of recognising that the interlay of structural, agentic and socio-cultural domains changes over time for each individual in ways that are not recognised in normative considerations of career-faring. The study finishes by identifying the research's three key claims relating to knowledge in educational career routes, an enhancement to Careership theory and importance of acknowledging the effects of structure, agency and culture over time.

## Chapter 2 Literature Review

### Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining the procedural scoping, mapping and focusing of the literature sought for this research, in order to consider educational careers and career trajectories through theoretical models and the context in which this study was based. It also highlights studies that have a specific focus on women and their careers over the life course.

The review is presented in four broad sections of literature on:

- i) Careers : Careers theories, educational careers research, advice and choices for women
- ii) Widening participation in HE: Impact of widening participation, teacher supply needs, part-time and mature students' experiences, FDs and TAs in HE
- iii) Social mobility: The gathering of capital and the employability agenda, social mobility and inequalities
- iv) Life course narratives: related to education, teachers and TAs

Literature considering injustices in education, which relate to ethnicity, gender and class, are interwoven through each of the sections of the review and there is necessarily overlap in these themes across the sections.

The literature below serves to elucidate existing knowledge and also the context for the central research questions:

1. How do TAs negotiate a career route to teacher status?

This focuses on literature that unveils understandings of educational career routes and opportunities in non-normative routes to HE and evidence of policy effecting access and success in HE in the field of educational study. A specific focus is on literature and research that centres on the experiences and context of mature part-time entrants to HE.

And secondly,

2. What factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path?

This includes paralleling existing literature to my study's participants (mature, part-time, female), identifying the choices, challenges and the affective affordances already exposed in similar literature. I conclude the chapter by summarising the gaps in the literature and those that this study addresses.

### Scoping, mapping and focusing existing literature

The literature scoped for this research was comprised from searches on the extensive academic search engine 'Summon', employing an advanced search process across the range of its databases. The search used '(search term) in (Title OR Abstract)' in order to locate topics. The search was narrowed by content type: book/ebook, book chapter, journal article, government document and by selecting 'education' as the discipline type.

Search term/s (no. found in search)	Book/ ebook	Book chapter	Journal article (peer reviewed)	Government document
Foundation degree (1,144)	181	97	861	5
Teaching assistants or learning support assistants (688)	236	84	373	0
Careership (11)	1	0	10	0
Career theory (2310)	219	49	2042	0
Career development theory (980)	145	16	823	0
Part-time students and HE (674)	41	33	601	1
Life course research (2071)	234	67	1770	0

Table 1 Search themes and numbers found

The terms searched covered the key areas that were likely to show what exists in the field in relation to TAs careers, careers theories and specifically Careership (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), Foundation degrees, part-time and mature students in HE, structure and agency themes in educational research and life course research. I thereby got an overview of a range of texts in the fields I was interested in and also to the studies utilising my methodology of choice in educational contexts.

The resultant texts were transferred to Proquest® RefWorks database and then sifted one-by-one through abstract readings, in order to exclude papers that were not likely to be relevant to this study. Refworks folders were kept under the search term types and were subsequently supplemented with additional texts found in GoogleScholar and from citation links from relevant articles and texts.

From this base material some subsections emerged, these are highlighted in each of the sections of the literature review analysed below.

Table 1 above shows very poor search return on (educational) 'government documents' using these terms. As an educator through this period of time, I was aware of the hundreds of policy documents that underpinned the changes during this period, yet they were unlikely to show up in this type of search. In order to audit the relevant documents, I employed a charting process to locate relevant policy decisions, Acts of Parliament and government initiatives on a timeline from 1967 to 2017 (see section example, (Appendix 1). Charting the documents served as a visual aid to refer to as the policy documents were presented and critically discussed within the articles and academic texts.

A separate discussion of the policy landscape is outlined in the introduction of this thesis, though here I include an assessment of the policy, reports and statistics of the period, that are relevant to the study, interweaving some of the academics' critiques sourced from the literature search texts.

My search of literature began by assessing policy, reports and statistics, which I detail later in the chapter. These documents related predominantly to admissions, retention and destinations of widening participation groups in HE, so I was able to de-select those which were not directly relevant to my needs. The review did identify studies and reports on FDs and the experiences of part-time and mature students in HE, which are discussed below. The thematic sections that follow incorporate literature relevant to the context, background, conceptualisation and analysis of this research, beginning with theories that have been used to understand and advise on careers.

## **Section i) Careers**

This first section focuses on literature and research relating to careers advice, careers theories and choices for women, and educational careers for TAs and decision making. The way careerfaring is navigated rather than decided was central to the search within the literature.

## Careers advice

Much careers literature relates to the quality of advice given to young people, fewer investigate what data tells us about the reality of living in the social world and navigating a work-life over time, which was the aim of my research.

The historical and long-standing debate between developmental (Super, in Freeman, 1993) and structural models (Roberts, 2013) in career 'choices' in England had already highlighted tensions in differences of opinion in how much autonomy is involved in career decision making. Super's primary focus on a set ordering of transitions in his theory of five stages in careers, seems to some as too inflexible and too dependent on psychological determinants (Roberts, 2013). Super has also been criticised for his research being based on male participants. In the context of women's careers, Super maintained the order of the five stages still held true but he offered a 'recycle' option in order to apply to different (from male) life course patterns (Freeman, 1993). Roberts' work paid more attention to the social and political context in which career guidance was given and had long since proposed that career decisions were entirely structurally dependent, with no agentic reality (Roberts, 1975). From an occupational structure theory perspective, close attention was paid to how the structural context influenced change. This influence became starkly felt when, following the Education Reform Act 1988, educational policy making was no longer the consensual activity it had been, where all parties collectively agreed. Henceforth, educational policy was controlled under the direct lead of government and their advisors, which directly altered careers guidance services in England from what had been intended to be joined up provision across educational and work sectors to separate deliveries of provision. A lens to recognise the impact of the transfer of power and also the associated impact of socio-economic factors (such as geographical differences in unemployment) that influences career opportunities, served to weaken 'choice' for many.

Later, Bagnoli and Ketokivi's (2009) work drew attention to unconscious and conscious 'fate and choice' in contemporary lives that had been ignored in recent social policy, which promoted autonomy as the preferred vehicle of operation. They explored the 'interplay between fate, choice and the social in people's biographies' (p.320) arguing that choices made are 'rarely fully conscious and it is unusual for people to be fully in control when making decisions on which way to go' (p.319). Whilst interesting in and of itself, I searched for a perspective that was open to

acknowledging the possibility of some awareness of autonomy for decision making within structures. Adshead and Jamieson (2008) studied 34 part-time mature students' educational decision-making and found technically rational decisions (on which policy is based) only become visible after mid-life for women. Before then, structural and gendered influences in career and family roles made decision-making more pragmatic. This got me closer to my focus. Ball et al (2000) also highlighted the importance of non-decision-making and noted the influence of family, especially from mothers, on post-16 career choices. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) had also been gaining momentum in identifying how personal abilities adapt to change and construct careers as the environment changes over time; it is largely used in the field of career counselling (Rudolf et al, 2019).

With empathetic consideration to all these theories and reflecting Law's (2009) dissatisfaction with Super's and Robert's perspectives as being as definitive as they suggested, I also wanted to find literature that was able to recognise sociological factors that reflect the complexity of people's decision-making in careers . This included attention being drawn to age, race, class and gender in the challenge for access to educational career opportunities. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) filled this gap by authoring a theory that encompasses the agentic and the structural, not demanding that they have to be one without the other. Whereas policy is based on assuming predictable, pre-conceived trajectories; the reality, particularly for those on atypical career routes, is somewhat more complex.

### **Career theories and choices for women**

Choices in careers have been explored in academic literature from various perspectives as being affected by social structures and/or individual agency. Whilst there is unlikely to be an entirely unified understanding between career theories, influences of 'gender, ethnicity, educational and occupational level of parents, and economic status' (Patton, 2013, p.16) have emerged in the last twenty-five years as central to the central discourses. However, with increased participation in employment for women, there appears to be room to suggest that policy making has nevertheless preserved influential and traditional understandings and expectations of times now past. Traditional career theories referred to traditional male lifecycles and work choices and, arguably, policy makers still assume these



traditional models in policy making, on which Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) and Hodkinson (2008) have commented.

Career theory is most broadly understood within the field of psychology, and most earlier career theories referred to the influence of the content, process and individual's decision-making, later including the situational (Walsh and Osipow, 2013). Matching personality or personal traits to careers was a psychological method used for advising on careers. Amongst its inconsistencies, it inferred that the agentic scope of choice was not fully realistic for most of the population and in particular with those with less cultural/social/economical capital than others. At this stage, this distinction was important. An overview of the tenets of these Bourdieuan concepts is detailed in Bourdieu: field, habitus and capital (Chapter 3, p.53) as I discuss their relevance to Careership theory.

Theoretical models developed in the area of individual difference in the 1980s, for example in Betz and Hackett's (1987) review of the career psychology of women. They identified influential factors in career choice for women as located in individual variables, educational variables and lifestyles. Patton's (2013) 'Conceptualising women's working lives' comprehensively discussed the breadth of models and frameworks used to understand women's working lives since Fitzgerald and Crites' (1980) seminal paper on women's working lives, and outlined evidence of ecological and systems theories, utility of systems approaches and relational theories. A number of relevant themes arise in Patton's analyses of the theories, including acknowledgement of the influence of feminist orientations and personal agency in women's career choices (Fassinger, 1990), but this comes alongside employers continued lower self-efficacy expectations in women, where Patton also cites Betz' (1994) work in identifying more confident expectations of output assumed from male employees. In terms of relational theory, Patton highlighted how women's identity is often located in connection to others, whereas men are seen to be differentiated through their abilities and attributes.

Patton and McMahon (1999) introduced a Systems Theory Framework, a systematic map focusing on the individual, rather than the theory and more recently, Patton (2013, p.17) still concluded the gap where, 'career theory needs to broaden its definitions and its conceptualisation of variables to become adaptive to change and more open to recognising working and non-work roles of women and care-givers'.

The numbers of women in employment rose continuously over the life course of my participants and the following data in related research helps to contextualise the changing environment in which this longitudinal study operates. Roantree and Vira (2018, p.3), researching for the Institute of Fiscal Studies, noted that in the prime working age (25-54) there was a rise from 57% of women being in employment in 1975 to 78% of the female working population being in employment in 2017. An increase in full-time employment for women from 29% in 1985 (when data collection began) to 44% in 2017 (ibid, p.4) also reflected the decline in the numbers of single earner families. Policy incentives that encouraged women into work were recognised, along with women with young children investing in education as a way into work (Roantree and Vira, 2018). The House of Commons briefing paper 'Women and the economy' (Powell, 2019) stated that the number of women over 16 in employment is still increasing. In that briefing, a decline to 41% for part-time employment for women is reported (in contrast to men at 13%) with the number of women working full-time increasing. 12% of jobs held by women are in the educational sector and 79% of the overall employment in this sector is held by women. Within this data are people of working age who are economically inactive as a consequence of caring responsibilities; 1.81 million women were in this category in 2018 (ibid, p.8). Additionally, the report quotes a 2017 Social Mobility Commission press release in confirming 'women are more likely to be low paid than men and also far more likely to get stuck in low pay' (Social Mobility Council, 2017). Male wages and employment also have a strong influence on power relations within the married or co-habiting household, even when there are no children (Blundell et al, 2007) giving the higher earner a relative bargaining value. Males, if in work, rarely work below 35 hours per week (ibid, p.435) and the distribution of the work hours do not depend on the female's working hours, which could be anywhere between 1 and 55 hours. Acknowledgement of this difference was important when analysing my data and confirms that the male TA experience could be different to that of the female. However, clearly not everybody falls into these typical categories, the study of multiple masculinities on non-stereotypical career choice for men (Hancock, 2012a, p.392) found increasingly that some men are more able to 'actively choose non-traditional occupations, albeit within a gendered, classed labour market' and called for more work on career choice and masculinity and suggested confidence for such choice could develop over time. Whilst this aspect is not directly a focus of this study,

the same research lens that I employ could be used to explore the relationships between agency, structures and cultural practices to understand the phenomena. It is also relevant that a genderised landscape remains but that it may be changing. A critical focus on the politics and gender, explored by Allen (2008), confirmed the possibility of understanding power and autonomy through dialogue. But this is a view that can be critiqued for not being cognisant of the unspoken effect of economic influences and in its focus on understanding, rather than change. However, Raggi and Troman's (2008) work on women's choices and changes to teaching careers focused on the combination of the relationship of their perceived self with circumstances of their context. This has resonance with Bourdieu's (1984) proposition that circumstances and dispositions shape decisions. Colley (2007, p.427) argued that, in the conceptual understandings of life course transitions, 'the dimension of change has been overemphasised, while the dimension of time has been neglected'. She confirms an argument that the use of time is engendered, experienced differently by women, and thereby has particular impact on their learning. Adshead and Jamieson (2008) identified different purposes for returners to education across the life span. In mid-life, for men, it was to meet work-related goals, whereas for women study and work decisions had to be pragmatic and secondary to family roles. This changed in later life when women had more capacity for agency and for the first time able to make more rationale choices.

A restricted analysis of either gender or race or class as individual foci of research has a purpose, but for my research a broader understanding of career choices that are affected by layers of social effects suggested a need for them to be considered together, rather than as individual strands. This drew me towards seeking a theory that was able to articulate an understanding of not only the macro, meso and micro but notice how perspectives change across time.

Accounts of educational careers also respectively emphasise agency, structure or cultural contexts, but few theoretical models acknowledge the weave of these layers. The literature below is concerned with specific aspects of knowledge and interest to my study, which have formed different insights specifically to educational careers and graduate progression.

## **Educational careers and decision making**

The Learning Lives Project (Biesta et al, 2011) was a large-scale, longitudinal study and combined existing survey research with life course and life history data. The richness of data from this method of collection ensured in-depth, individual expression and conversation about topics. Learning lives was generally positive in the reported benefits from learning throughout the life course and in its ontology is closest to my study, which was possibly accentuated by Hodkinson's membership in this research team. A closer link in literature to learning support professions is in the research of the career trajectories of TAs (Dunne et al, 2008). It considered the impact of policy landscape on access and career progression following FD study. Their findings suggested that advancing age, employer reactions to the qualification and lack of progression routes in particular school sectors negatively affect career advancement. However, the participants in the research were clear in their perception of significant personal and professional development over the course of study. Similar personal satisfaction was gained by TAs in Brown and Devecchi's (2013) study of the impact of their training: their professional development and knowledge grew, but there was little or no career progression.

Career decisions were found to be values-based, strategic, aspirational or opportunistic when Bimrose and Barnes (2007) tracked 30 careers over 5 years to assess the impact of careers guidance. They highlighted the frequency and impact of unplanned decision making and constraints over which the participants of the study had no control, related to ethics, gender, age, disability etc, as well as barriers relating to health issues, local job availability, childcare responsibilities and financial difficulties.

Careership theory for decision-making in careers, recognises family and local influences as well as the policies that influence decisions (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). This perspective maintains that policy often 'oversimplifies, or is ignorant of, the social and cultural complexity at which it is directed' (p.41). Their research concluded by welcoming use of their model in other contexts. In a similar vein to Goodlad (2007), I concur with the assertion that Hodkinson's work is more appropriate to understand learning lives than individualistic models of analysis. For this study, this approach allowed an analysis that was not centred around the efficacy of career advice or services but enabled a more holistic view of observing the impact of changing contexts over time on these educational careers.

It was useful to trace the etymology of career decision-making theories from what was initially perceived to be located in self-initiated 'turning points' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997; Laub and Sampson, 1993, 'fateful moments' (Giddens, 1991, p.112) or the effects of chance events (Rice, 2014) to an acknowledgement of the impact of social and structural contexts and time. Raggi and Troman (2008) argued against a position that shows women making 'choices' about domestic and work balance options without considering the social context of their environments and went on to argue that gender, in particular, has significant influence on career change decisions. Their take on 'turning points' in teaching careers was to identify whether change was self-initiated, forced or structural.

Theories of cultural practice are seen by some as offering a middle way between structural and agentic theories. In 2008, Hodkinson revised Careership theory to reject the concept of turning points and instead considered 'horizons of action' in the context of the given field at any given time, or 'habitus' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) as more appropriate. Many social science researchers turn to Bourdieu for theoretical analysis, through the concept of habitus. Bourdieu's habitus is understood as subsumed and unconscious (embodied) patterns of mental and behavioural actions within particular socio-economic conditions, and as practices with shared dispositions learnt over time through socialisation. Analysing habitus offered a way to understand decision-making other than by using rational perspectives. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argued that decision-making in careers can be rational, but mostly people react to 'what feels right' (ibid, p.131) in the context (field and habitus), which is not evident in the agentic expectation of free choice as assumed in policy. Further identification of the work of Bourdieu: field, habitus and capital is outlined in Chapter 3 (p.53) as I connect them to Careership theory.

A number of studies have employed Careership theory to explore aspects of educational careers. Allin and Humberstone (2006) used the theory with their study of women in outdoor education to show how their decisions were affected by their socio-cultural and structural context, highlighting the gendered nature of outdoor educators' careers. Women football coaches' 'forced' and 'self-initiated' decisions were studied through Careership theory (Barker-Ruchti et al, 2014), though they did employ the 1997 'turning points' approach in analysis. However, like my study, there was the use of a (different) mapping technique to gather and analyse in depth data from the semi-structured interviews. Hancock's (2012) research was on the decision-

making of male returners to further education and whilst also using other theoretical lenses, he largely focused on employing Hodkinson and colleagues' Careership theory to find a strong link to a desire to develop knowledge gained in prior employment.

Significantly, Hodkinson's call in 2008 was to challenge the plethora of 'folklore' in policy and advice, which was based on a hypothesis that careers follow a linear pathway, that if 'good' decisions and career matches are made it is likely to be unproblematic and argued also that the assumption that people can make free decisions about their career paths is deficient. Rather, Hodkinson proposed a Careership theory that 'should provide understanding that can valuably inform research, policy and practice' (ibid, p.5).

Having considered associated literature exploring analysis of decision making in careers, particularly in relationship to Careership theory, I then turned to an exploration of reports and issues more broadly related to widening participation in HE and then responses to predicted teacher shortages. This served to unveil the structural context for the study and evidenced socio-economic and cultural influences, after which the review of associated literature turns to the experiences of part-time mature students in HE and then a body of research specifically on the FD qualification.

## **Section ii) Widening participation in HE**

### **Widening participation in HE and teacher supply**

The widening of participation in HE became a central agenda issue in 1990s England with the aim of enabling access for a previously barred cohort, such as mid-career women and men wishing to study as they worked. This strategy aimed at broadening access to HE and enabled the participants in this study to become returners to education for what they identified as 'a chance to make something of themselves'. The inclusion of a traditionally excluded yet 'talented' cohort, supposed a parallel growth in wealth creation through a knowledge economy, though Brown and Hesketh (2004), in their critique 'The Mismanagement of Talent', disputed both the efficacy and morality of this strategy. Graduate level jobs in general have not

kept pace with increased numbers of graduates and so for many it has stalled or curtailed a return of their investment in HE (Tomlinson, 2013).

The background to this context lies in a number of policies and responses in the literature. Widening participation policy during the 1990s celebrated 'diversity', promoting the gathering of 'human capital' for the purpose of building a knowledge economy (McCaig, 2018). The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) encouraged polytechnics to apply for university status, which meant more competition for funding and for what became a tiered system by distinguishing between 'Oxbridge', 'Russell group' or 'redbrick' universities and the 'post-92' universities. There was subsequent recommendation of an introduction of partial fees to the incoming Labour government to fund the expansion in access to HE (Dearing, 1997), the effect of which had financial consequences for the 'choices' made by the participants in this study. The education and training markets were encouraged to establish new competition, from which choice could be had. The conditions of this choice in lifelong learning in the UK has since been critiqued by a range of critical authors in the field of education (including Reay, 2017a, 2017b; Ball, 2010; Archer, 2007; Colley, 2007; Avis et al, 1996; Fuller 2001). Warren and Webb (2007, p.5) summarised their study by saying that 'choices' are only made available to those who 'contribute to government economic agendas' and suggested that focusing solely on learner experience is inadequate to understand the conditions of choice, a view that confirmed location of this study closely to the influence of policy.

The Higher Education Act (2004) and White Papers (House of Commons, 2003; Milburn, 2009) primarily emphasised policy interests related to widening participation and access, and there was continued concern with: diversity (DBIS, 2014); effect of fees (UUK, 2010); admissions policies (UUK, 2009; Hoare and Johnson, 2011); flexible learning (UUK, 2011; Maguire, 2013); retainment (Pope et al, 2017); and career destinations (Gaskell and Lingwood, 2016; Milburn, 2017). In the main these were directed at school-leavers, yet destination data suggests that students across all widening participation groups, despite degree level qualifications, 'are disadvantaged in the labour market' (Moore et al, 2013, p. viii). Confirmation seems to come from Brown and Devecchi's (2013) and Dunne et al's (2008) research on Foundation degree teaching assistants where they found that there was little movement in careers for graduates of FDs. More recent work by Bovill et al (2019) suggests that FDs, if fully supported by policy, could form a route to be encouraged

for TAs to progress to teacher status, especially at a time where there is a teacher shortage. They note that a third of TAs already have a degree (Bloom, 2017, p.1) and that TAs, are an 'untapped resource' (Bovill et al 2019, p.4), who may have aspiration to become teachers given 'conducive circumstances'(ibid), a theme to which I return throughout this research. In some contexts, such as the evaluation of teacher supply initiatives, independent research is not being operationalised at all (See and Gorard, 2019). However, when the continuing shortages in teachers resulted in various policy initiatives to address, for instance, financial incentives for attraction and initiatives for retaining teachers and teacher/pupil ratios, these have not been successful enough nor independently evaluated (See and Gorard, 2019). See and Gorard (2019) criticised money being thrown in the direction of short-term and costly schemes related to the teacher supply issue, whilst others such as Bukodi and Goldthorpe (2018) for the Social Mobility Commission continued to encourage joined-up policy making across the sector and beyond. The point here being that evidence suggested that policy was not likely to meet this concern in the longer term without coordinated change across social policies to support recruitment, new training opportunities and research in this area. For the focus of my research, this included understanding and finding out how to liberate the potential of mature part-time students in HE.

The UK government's virtually exclusive acknowledgement of statistically measurable evidence-based data in educational research limits the exploration of multiple and complex layers of influence that may be gathered and expressed in narratives of life and work. I concur with an argument that recognises evidence-based practice (EBP) as 'deeply causal... but needs contextual matters at centre stage' for desirable results to work in practice (Kvernbekk, 2017, p.1). Kvernbekk's (2017) and Biesta's (2007) argument that EBP research, strongly favoured by authors such as Slavin (2002), can be criticised for being difficult to replicate because of the complex nature of associated social conditions. HEFCE's review of literature on widening participation in HE (Moore et al, 2013), to inform a national strategy, used empirical and statistical data, but categorically rejected 'emerging, theoretical or discussion pieces'(p.iv). Although HEFCE *did* note the importance and gap in understanding 'the distinctive characteristics of the part-time population' and looking beyond 'large monolithic categories' (ibid, p.ix). I argue that this is precisely where research does have value, following Ken Plummer's (2016) lead in promoting



a critical narrative approach to research, in order to listen to the human story of experiences and bring attention to 'values such as care, dignity and justice' (np).

### **Part-time and mature student experiences of HE**

For this literature review, I focused on experiences of mature learners entering HE as FD students as closely as possible. Fenge (2011) carried out a local small-scale study on perspectives of mature students on a health and social care FD to explore, through a Bourdieuan lens, how mature learners make sense of themselves and identified how their course was felt to be 'not quite higher education'. The purpose for FDs was to encourage widening participation in HE (DfES, 2003b), but increasingly FDs became more commonly provided through FEIs. Unlike this example, the participants in my study completed their FD in university based HE, though the opportunity was short-lived, and soon the education-based FD was transferred to a 4-year, part-time Honours degree course. In the early 2000s, Fuller (2001) warned of the impending growth of credentialism, which encouraged part-time study with the promise of improving work prospects, but where there was the unknown danger of whether there would be acceptance in the workplace of these sub-Honours level qualifications.

Two reports concerned with the part-time experience emerged in 2013/14, 'The power of part-time: review of part-time and mature Higher Education' (Universities UK), which focussed on developing flexible learning and the Higher Education Policy Institute report's (HEPI) 'Flexible learning: wrapping HE around needs of part-time students' (Maguire, 2014), which highlighted a lack of information based in the relationship between mature students and their socio-economic backgrounds. Measurements of participation related to socio-economic groups or household income are more widely available for FT students and are less representative in social mobility data of access to PG study or in gender differences (Lindley and Machin, 2012). There is research on a range of minority groups in HE such as, black and ethnic minority participation (Singh, 2011), disadvantaged students in poor communities (The Sutton Trust, 2008; Milburn, 2012), care leavers (Jackson et al, 2005), all focussed on the younger generation. Almost entirely, statistical studies are focussed on raising employment and social mobility. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS, 2014) confirmed that there is statistical data on

employment outcomes for part-time students (the majority being mature and employed), 'but the data will not record whether their job after graduation is the same or a new one' (p.70).

Most widening participation data about *young* participants was considered 'robust' (DBIS, 2014, p.70) and DBIS stated that their future focus would be on mature students and their socio-economic background. A focus on post-graduate study in 'Mature entrants' transitions to postgraduate taught study' (DBIS, 2016) aimed 'for the first time' (p.144) to understand the transitions of mature returners to HE in terms of their motivations, profiles, funding mechanisms and barriers to participation. They found that whilst there was still a demand for high level knowledge and skills from employers, the numbers of part-time PGs continues to fall, suggesting policy makers and stakeholders do more research work in the areas of financial, locational and flexible access to PG study and in noticing different needs of different age groups. Statistical data showing HE participation by gender exists only for full-time mature students, not part-time (for example, ONS, 2014). DBIS (2014) showed more of a concern with progression efficiencies and recommended future research on part-time and mature students' progress to post-graduate study and the tracking of intentions after graduating. The National Strategy for Access and Student Success (DBIS, 2014) identified 90% of part-time students as mature, 61% over 29 and 61% of the part-time students, female. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2020) holds data of UK mature undergraduates in full-time degree programmes and their percentage drop out a year later, but there is no similar data for mature part-time students. For PG study, 80% are in work (76% FT jobs) as they study part-time (DBIS, 2016) and timing of study at this level is dependent on their other social and financial commitments. This paper however, concluded with more concern over financial implications for younger PGs who are less likely to have supportive employers or FT work.

Callender (2011, 2013), a staunch supporter of part-time HE provision writes of the private and public benefits of study in HE and Callender used data to examine the influence of funding regimes on widening participation and part-time students in HE. She has consistently argued that 'the system of support favours full-time HE at the expense of part-time ones' (2011, p.470), providing further evidence of a current gap in raising the profile and support for untapped potential (Bovill et al, 2019).

The four most popular subjects studied by two thirds of part-time students, includes education and HEPI (Maguire, 2013) also recognises that two thirds of this cohort also have family commitments. The National Union of Students/Million+ (Morris and Mcvitty, 2012) report the two major challenges to part-time students are balancing studies and financial difficulties. Clark's speech (2014) highlighted the 'gulf between entry to university and participation in the leadership of institutions' for women and texts such as 'Women and success' (Hoskins, 2012) have been focussed on higher ranks of academia.

However, there is a breadth of work celebrating the personal gains, for instance, those measured in identity, human and social capital (Jamieson et al, 2009), in work-related gains outside of the normative measures of job progression (Callender and Little, 2015) and the motivations and significant outcomes, understood as forms of capital (Swain and Hammond, 2011) for part-time students.

Literature reviews of part-time study include that by the Foundation Degree Forward (Harvey, 2009) and one focused on the benefits associated with part-time study (Bennion et al, 2011). By 2015, part-time students were one quarter of the student population (HESA, 2016). The volume of work specifically on part-time students from this search (September 2019) shows only 28 associated outputs in the last year showing 'a bleak contemporary landscape' especially for part-time students (Carruthers Thomas, 2019, p.21).

To work whilst studying is an international phenomenon; Gbadamosi et al's (2019) study in Cambodia showed improvements in self efficacy and career aspiration for part-time student workers, whilst McLinden (2017) and Goodchild (2019) considered the needs of part-time students in the early weeks of transition to HE.

In terms of research on life experiences of mature women after HE, Lee (2019) took a perspective of exploring 'alternative notions of agency' in a biographical case study in South Korea, which identified 'endurance, inter-dependence with close relations, emotion and affection-effecting others and society' (p.83), that is, noticing the non-rational affects too. My study also indicates complex transitions post-HE in family and the work roles Lee discusses with temporarily low paid or short-term contracts to fit with other gendered responsibilities, parallels some of the narratives of this study's participants. Likewise, over time, her participants realised the high-profile jobs they wanted, with Lee speaking of the necessity of 'endurance and negotiation'(p.95) in

the process. To relocate these experiences to the research of FDs, I next consider associated themes related to career development for TAs.

### **Foundation Degrees**

In order to focus the search of texts on FDs, I excluded the articles and texts whose foci were related to the setting up and curriculum design of FD programmes, study skills, training manuals and guides for TAs. Those papers that focussed specifically on subject content, such as in sport, law, health and social care were non-prioritised, unless the methodology or themes were relevant. This sorting was done through Refworks and personal note making.

Topic areas that emerged as relevant to this study were: transitions, personal development, decision-making, destinations and careers, policy and workforce relevance, student experience and perceptions, as summarised below.

Transitions from FDs to Honours degree studies identified emotion and identity as important features (Morgan, 2015; Mytton and Rumbold, 2011) as well as the quality and focus of transition workshops (Curtis et al, 2017; Winter and Dismore, 2010) and this study found similar experiences.

Informed decision-making processes (Greenbank, 2007; 2009; Schofield and McKenzie, 2018) were concerned with the non-rational processes that are involved in choices of courses and were also found to be based on the proximity of the HEI to home and/or the relative costs of attendance. Penketh and Goddard's (2008) research was close to my area of interest in terms of subject area (Learning Support) and its focus was on the pedagogic value of using student narratives to prepare for transition. It took an action research approach to improve practices at a particular HEI. Associates of this research at Edge Hill University and associated with the FD Learning Support courses offer the closest match to my research. Dunne, Goddard and Woolhouse (2008a; 2008b) and Woolhouse, Dunne and Goddard (2009) researched the experiences of TAs and Learning Support practitioners on a FD through a Bourdieuan lens, as they were interested in the effects of policy and social justice. They called for more exploration into the clash in demands between family responsibility and the personal benefits gained from study on FDs. This experience was contextualised vividly by ultimately highlighting that the economic gains for TAs were non-existent or at best hindered. In addition, there were clear signals that the

FDs emerged as greatly undervalued by employers. Herrera et al (2013) tested this perception with employers of pharmacy technicians and found lack of knowledge of what FDs were and a belief that although it served its purpose, other qualifications enabled similar work-based skills.

Taylor's (2014) longitudinal case study of three primary TAs over their two years of study explored the effects of work-based situated learning and communities of practice, but closest to my research is that of Dunne, Goddard and Woolhouse's (2008a) longitudinal study of TAs over three years on and post FD study. The 2008a study focuses on the first phase of the research, whilst the TAs were on the course (2003-5). It considered the benefits and likelihood of their continuing in lifelong learning and the impact professionally and personally of FD study and qualification. Their findings drew attention to the mismatch between government rhetoric and the lived experience of the street-value of the FD qualification. The widening participation agenda and benefits of lifelong learning were being presented as unproblematic, whilst significant personal gains were tarnished by little or no financial reward despite significant investment of time, emotion and finances by the TAs and their families. Notwithstanding this, half of the participants planned to continue to complete an Honours degree and only three said they definitely would not return to study. Their 2008b study followed up the cohort, showing their disillusionment with how the FD was not commonly recognised, which negatively affected their initial drive to become a teacher. Woolhouse, Dunne and Goddard (2009) followed up their research with a survey and six interviews, again recognising the limited economic gain and the challenges, especially for working mothers, and the impact this has on families. The lack of financial gain conflicted with the hugely beneficial personal and professional gains of work-based study in terms of confidence and competence. My inquisitiveness of what happens in the longer term initiated my research questions that were designed to interrogate a longer view of what impacted and effected TAs career development opportunities over time. Like the authors above, I have a professional and moral imperative within me, calling for understanding and examples of the effects of educational policy on 'ordinary' people at the grass roots level, and particularly those on non-normative routes to and through HE. In my professional position, I had access to follow up on my participants' careers and my research can add detail and longevity of exploration to the existing knowledge in this area.

Exploratory studies to assess the policy background (such as Wilson et al, 2005; Craig, 2009) and critiques on the 'risky business', associated with the efficacy of FD qualification (Rowley, 2005), informed the background of my research. Herrera et al (2013) called attention to extensive *personal development* and motivation of FD students, but questioned the *level of work-based specialist knowledge and skills* gained. This was somewhat reflected in Dunne et al's (2008a) 'mapping the changes' that actually identified considerable gains in classroom practice, personal development and confidence for TAs, but once again, also significant challenges in the lack of career progression structures and opportunities in educational workplaces. Edmond, Hillier and Price (2007) broadened the call for systematic analysis of the benefits of all work-based study formats, focusing on the need for more engagement between the employers and HEIs on individual programmes. Conversely, Craig's (2009) assessment of FDs praised the employer engagement with HEIs in the formation of 'new spheres of public engagement' (p.23) and suggested that they met the Higher Education Funding Council, England's (HEFCE, now Office for Students) aim of employer engagement in HE courses, whilst encouraging widening participation goals and enabling mature part-time learners to progress from FE to HE.

### **Section iii) Gaining capital**

This section considers research related to the gathering of capital to aid employability, the persistence and influence of power and wealth distributions and in noticing the relevance of Bourdieu-inspired concepts and analyses in research.

#### **Employability, social mobility and gaining 'capital'**

Brown and Hesketh (2004, p. 36) discussed the 'narrative of employability', a phrase used in the contemporary language of economics and neo-liberal politics. They identified individual and societal understandings of the 'hard currencies' of credentials and work experience that also need to be enhanced by 'soft currencies' of personal skills, affiliations and appearances. In addition, there is 'the self' as influenced by, for instance, family, gender, ethnicity or values that are packaged together. Power through wealth can encourage and maintain greater access to educative experiences for some compared to others.

Education has evolved as part of the market economy, in which some groups can benefit more than others. In Livingston's work (2009) she uses the metaphor of hand and foot holes on a climbing wall, where they are 'not positioned advantageously' for many. Livingston developed a proposition that explores sub-types of cultural capital, including her example of 'pedagogical capital', to determine if some enter fields of education with more likelihood of success, due to 'knowing' the inherent standards and norms of institutions and hegemonic curricula, as well as owning familial and networked cultural capital. There is an abundance of valuable research using Bourdieu's concepts of 'capital' (1986) for this type of analysis. Bourdieu offers a framework to understand scholastic privilege and disadvantage in relation to gender too and this is discussed in relation to this study on pages 53-55.

Fifteen years ago, Brown and Hesketh (2004) argued that opportunities for career success remained biased and elitist, and that positional advantage was still a prerequisite for competitive jobs. They noted the value of large-scale surveys in research, but also identified the importance of analysing the 'personal and social drama involved in the competition for a livelihood' (p.5), the 'lived experiences' (p.5) and 'private troubles' (p.6) of individuals, in order to reveal wider public issues that impact on why some win and others lose in a knowledge-based economy. My thesis attends to this weaker link in current research and promises to contribute to knowledge by extracting stories that can show 'real world' examples (Robson and McCarten, 2016, p.3) of the influence of higher education (HE) on mid-career women working in educational roles.

A critical educator's stance seeks evidence of social injustice and Plummer's (2001) use of critical narrative research offered examples of just that and is close in purpose to my aim to reveal socio-cultural *and* structural influences in education. He forwards an argument that demands research to be social, moral and political at every stage.

Jackson and Marsden's (1966) seminal work 'Education and the working class' also showed inequality that was maintained through power and wealth. The wastage of talent was highlighted at the beginning of the study: 'Britain still underrates the colossal waste of talent in working-class children' (p.16) but the suspicion that the land did not lie evenly for everyone also encouraged insights to the unequal gains and losses in the educational system. Their work prefigured Bourdieu's work in many

ways by focussing research on how wealth and power infiltrated the educational system.

Reay (2017a) in 'Miseducation' confirms this has not changed; the standards agenda was, and is, a political project increasingly premised on imbalanced competitiveness. She persuasively insists that social mobility is 'optimistic fantasy' (2017a, p.102) and rhetoric, used to place individual responsibility on realising aspirations where there is little or no accompanying resource (Reay, 2017b; Lawler and Payne, 2017).

Simmons and Smyth (2018) concur that the problem lies with class-based inequality, rather than social mobility. The primary focus of these texts is on young people, with very little in these texts considering the adult returners to education.

Reay is stimulated and angered by her own experiences and those she has studied to explain the impossibility of change happening through the efforts of individuals, such as individual teachers. She denies that 'a patchwork of narratives of class and education'(2017a, p.6) can offer change. Reay calls for educational policies to acknowledge that economic resources are required alongside a curriculum of collaboration, cooperation, dialogue, with diversity within schools (rather than competition between schools) and offers suggestions for change in the school system to emulate some of the higher performing countries, citing research such as that of Johnson et al (1981) and Kyndt et al, (2013), confirming that 'research over a 40-year period demonstrates that the impact of collaborative approaches to learning is consistently positive and enhances attainment'(Reay, 2017a, p.188). This is in contrast to the hegemonic political rhetoric that says your own advancement is your responsibility. Quite clearly, for Reay (2003), this is anything but 'meritocratic' in a pure sense but weighted at more high cost/high risk for some in relation to others. Reay's work is principally focused on class, but she confirms that class is also necessarily gendered and raced.

Ball (2010) also criticised the social inequalities in education recognising 'active parenting' through the buy-in of educational services to further invest in enhancing chances that are in addition to mainstream schooling. The 'mobilisation of capitals' is recognised by Bathmaker and colleagues (Bathmaker, Ingram & Waller, 2013; Bathmaker et al, 2016) to be unequally realised. Their research confirmed the advantages of access to and investment in extra-curricular activities, the benefits of 'knowing the game' (p.724) and the embodiment of accepted social behaviours. Generally, relative advantage is maintained by those who previously had the



greatest accumulated capital. The privileged are continually constructing new ways of maintaining social advantage. Bathmaker et al (2016) conclude that HE can be a mechanism for mobility, but this does not influence any erasure of existing structures of inequality overall.

A concept that has become a popular metaphor showing the limitations of inequality in careers is with the definition of the glass ceiling effect:

‘A glass ceiling inequality represents a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee... (that is, after controlling for education, experience, abilities, motivation, and other job-relevant characteristics)’ (Cotter et al, 2001, p.657).

The concept of the glass ceiling effect has also been re-considered to be defined as actually made of concrete for women of colour, which further emphasised the challenges faced by additional direct and indirect racial discrimination (Catalyst.org, 1999). In a recent paper, Friedman and Laurison (2015) also refer to a ‘class’ ceiling in identifying a problem with fair access in Britain by looking at class origins of those in the elite Class 1 NS-SEC classification group. They acknowledged multiple layers of disadvantage effecting careers and called for social policy, to take note of what the rhetoric of ‘fair access’ might actually mean.

To understand these inequities in the lives of real people, life course narratives offer a method to enable insight to how experiences feel and are lived. Such empirical knowledge could take policy decisions outside of assumptions made on other peoples’ lives. So, finally, I turn to the review to consider the part that life course research has played in the literature related to this thesis. However, a more in-depth reasoning for selecting this mode of data collection appears in Chapter 3.

## **Section iv) Life course narratives**

### **Life course narratives**

Life course narrative approaches are employed to hear voices telling us about the worlds we experience, seeing future possibilities, communicating and being more widely aware, more democratic (Plummer, 2013). They are often used to better understand humanity and change. Life histories explore how learning is felt, expressed and how it has shaped our identities at a particular place and time (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010); all of these, pertinent to this study.

Plummer suggests that all stories are 'patterned through cultures of inequalities' (2013, p.8), but they are not equally heard. Findings often project beyond the stories and reveal other socially textured narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Brine (in Bathmaker and Harnett, 2010, p.8) describes the impact that educational policy can have on people's learning lives and which thereby emphasises the connection between policy, lives and identity. Research on teachers' professional lives (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) uncovered how the collaborative aspect of the narrative approach also informed practical strategies for personal and professional development. There was also note of growing use of narrative approaches in social science research, yet it was acknowledged that these are also challenged as not being 'proper' (that is, scientific) research (ibid, p.3). I concur with Bruner (1996) when he argued that logical-scientific and narrative intelligence are interdependent and recognise that in the western world logical-scientific intelligence is privileged and investigation is worthy of pursuing in alternative ways in order to call attention to the silent or tacit influences on (women's) career progression in educational environments and the ability to connect individual accounts with self-awareness and broader social and cultural practices. The suggestion that researchers ask questions within narrative-based research to explore how local labour, education and training markets are structured makes sense. This is needed in order to understand the social, economic and political forces that constitute local, institutional and vocational learning and to consider what resources are needed for success (Warren and Webb, 2007).

In literature that followed life course research perspectives, Howes and Goodman-Delahunty (2014) combined the use of a life course research design with career theory. They analysed the transitions in career change from policing to teaching in Australia and whilst not directly using Careership theory, they were considering turning points and transitions at this time and how the participants felt more valued in their new career contexts. Again, this study emphasised turning points, which I avoided so whilst the Learning Lives Project (Biesta et al, 2011) that I discussed in section i) is close to the life course approach that inspired this methodology, I also explored further innovative methods that are expounded in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

## **Conclusion of chapter**

Longitudinal research exploring TAs' careers is sparse to non-existent. Most of the literature on TAs career progression was written at the height of provision for Foundation degrees during the 2000s as HEIs built their programmes and they were frequently concerned with transitions between FDs and top-up Honours degrees and the value of the outcomes for stakeholders. Most studies used surveys and interviews or focus groups to gather data. The nearest to the field of my research is in the qualitative research from Edge Hill colleagues in the 2000s (Penketh and Goddard, 2008; Dunne et al, 2008a, 2008b; Woolhouse, et al 2009). My research serves to extend knowledge that these studies initiated, in a longer timescale, to consider influences on further career progression over time. A new paper (Bovill et al, 2019) has revived a line of thought and brought it to the table; it is one which my study could help to inform. They suggest that the 'talent' that lies in TAs is an 'untapped resource' (p.4) that could be activated if clear routes were made that also fit with the lives of women.

I therefore have unanswered questions related to my central questions on how TAs negotiate a career route to teacher status, particularly in sustaining this route over time, and in what factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a rationale and justification for the choice of methodology, which served to answer the central research questions:

- How do teaching assistants negotiate a career route to teacher status?
- What factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path?

I open by giving an overview of my approach to the research and then discuss its compatibility to critically reflexive life course studies, drawing from the seminal work of Elder and Giele (2009). Then, I explain how my approach was influenced and substantiated by acknowledging Lara's (1998) work in the power of narratives to understand universal socio-cultural issues. The chapter pursues an argument to show how the use of life course narrative together with the ideographic data collection method was a particularly effective medium to employ.

The significance of building a way to distinguish how temporal influences are integrated is addressed for the purpose of further substantiating the congruence of this approach to my research aims. Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) 'Careership theory' is then introduced as the central theoretical framework identifying how that influenced the selection of methods for data collection and analysis. This is followed by a summary of my intended contribution to the field and re-visits the research questions. Before concluding the chapter there is a section on ethical considerations for this type of study, where I identify as an insider-researcher.

### **Overview of the research approach**

This interpretivist life course study explored mid-career TAs, who entered HE with a common aim to better themselves and/or to find a route to develop their career and increase family income. It was a single site study with a particular focus on the career routes and experiences of TAs who entered HE with non-traditional qualifications. In order to understand how they experience, perceive, balance and integrate the personal and the professional within wider economic and social influences, I traced eight TAs' learning lives and careers from their memories of early educational experiences to the present day, along with their hopes for the future at

various times in their lives. Through individual interviews and an ideographic mapping technique (see Chapter 4), I asked them about their early education, key events in their lives, their working life before entering HE, decisions for entry to HE and their subsequent career routes to address the demands of the research questions.

I was able to draw further insights to the historical and current influences on the TAs educational lives by mapping the context of the socio-political landscape of the time to the effect it had on their career. The data from the interviews were then mapped to a linear timeline of educational policy and political influence (Appendix 1). The resultant documents then had potential to extend understanding of the contextual change in their lives over time and to aid insights that 'link social change, social structure and individual behaviour' (Elder and Giele, 2009, p.2), a key concept in life course study and central to answering the aims of the research.

As a framework for data analysis, I employed Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) Careership theory, which is underpinned by Bourdieu's concepts of capital\* and field\*\*. This perspective was important for this study in its potential to notice the positioning of individuals in structural and social contexts. In analysis, the findings were paralleled with other contemporary positionings of social and economic status to analyse the macro-to-micro structural and contextual level of the data, which Elder and Giele (2009) identified as central in life course research. This research approach is also compatible with Hodkinson's (2008) advice that Careership theory should recognise opportunity structures (or lack thereof), but also acknowledge that career decisions within the macro forces are often messy and cannot be simplified through theory alone. Lara's (1998) work was significant in recognising the power of individual cultural narratives that also extend the understanding of universal social justice issues that this research exposed. Asking the TAs about their education and experiences, I aimed to locate the possible effects of change related to national policy making and the socio-cultural impacts on the choices and pathways across their career routes, as well as the effect of embodied dispositions. In accordance with Lara's (1998, p.14) critical approach to narratives, I did not seek to expose individual privilege or oppression in the participants, but rather to uncover the way

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\* Capital p.54

\*\* Field p.53

that their stories could expose broader power relations as they navigated a career through a challenging landscape. The findings intended to prepare evidence that could be used in wider debate about the impact of national policy on specific groups of people accessing HE by uncovering hopes, aspirations and lived experiences in their careers, whilst concurrently avoiding their presentation entirely as individual, subjective representations.

The next section discusses the congruence of this critically reflexive life course approach in the design of the research process.

### **Compatibility of a critical approach in life course studies**

This study followed an approach in life course histories that aimed to find the human story (Plummer, 2001) amongst the macro field data and explored the context in which life was experienced that might otherwise be hidden. Plummer insists that we need 'to take seriously human subjects' (2001, p.x) and break away from positivist mainstream methodologies to understand constantly changing experiences of the world. It is a view compatible with life course theory in its study of social structures, social change *and* individual action through life events. A humanist interest in the quality of lives, which Plummer extols, is not divided from technical data collected in this paradigm. Life course research inevitably features relational aspects of timing, agency, linked lives and social context, which are argued to be dynamics in life that should not be ignored in any social science study (Giele and Elder, 1998). Hence, in this research the inclusion of individuals' views, in the context of understanding their relationship to the time in which it occurred, is crucial.

A life course approach to the methodology enabled consideration of both professional and private lives from empirical accounts of the cultural narratives, which were captured against a specific policy landscape. A key focus was in the impact of significant and numerous changes in policy between 2010 and 2019, from the time of the 2010 General Election in England, through the 2015 General Election, and on to 2019, as this was a time where the participants reflected on establishing their careers.

In the narratives collected, I recognised the potential of accumulating accounts of past experiences and contexts of each participant as a bricolage of other stories, which Haywood Rolling Jr in his work on fathers and sons (in Bathmaker and

Harnett, 2010, p. 147), defined as 'competing stories'. Each of the TAs was likely to experience some similar and other quite different experiences in navigating their careers. The multilogical bricolage refers to 'multiple research approaches and theoretical constructs ... (to provide) a new form of rigour in research...(for) thick, useful descriptions of social, psychological and education phenomena while avoiding the reductionism of social science' (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004, p.x). The term bricolage, made popular through Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) work, allows the complexity of power relations, culture and history to be understood as not being restricted to monological research strategies that are used in some evidence-based traditional disciplines. Exploring alternative meanings through multi-layered methods enables a deeper analytical approach to be realised and the bricoleur to be self-reflective in choosing methods to reveal the relationships of diverse perspectives and experiences.

In order to better understand this and to answer my research questions, my research was designed to assemble recollections of subjective experiences and influences that may shape collective depictions across this period of time. Significantly, I needed to ensure that I paralleled those retrospections alongside policy, as depicted by politicians and explained by theorists. This purposely differs to a post-modern approach, influential in contemporary auto/biographies, that insists that the text gathered is entirely socially constructed and focussed on individual voice. Stories in life course history, which are focussed on everyday life, illustrate linked connections between personal life and wider social and political structures, rather than being solely the reflection of a single, unique experience.

A narrative life course approach allows stories related to both past and current experiences to emerge, as well as the ability to acknowledge career aspirations. It promotes a democratic hearing of subjective individual narratives that may also be possible to understand more generally as belonging to a group (Plummer in Stanley, 2016). Plummer advocates stories as having 'an inner life – the stories they tell us; and an outer life – a narrative reality that works its way through the wider society and history' (ibid, p.210). Infinite nuances emerge through the examination of inner/outer; public/private; universal/personal; macro/micro experiences and perspectives that are inherent in a life course inquiry. It is precisely the data that I intended to search, to understand the complexity in the navigation of the careers by the TAs.

I chose a life course approach that differs from mere curiosity in life stories, and heads away from the 'therapeutic turn', which Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) critique as a form of surveillance, a person-focussed responsibility that is exposed to public view. My approach encompassed the understanding that personal narratives include public as well as private issues that occur in the context of a period of time and are experienced irrevocably in relation to social structures and power relations (Bathmaker & Harriett, 2010 after Wright Mills, 1959). Narratives captured in life course research include past and present experiences, as well as future aspirations, to reveal the particular and detailed complexities and experiences of lived life/lives over time. Bathmaker and Harnett hold that 'emphasis on the particular' in research (2010, p.3) can serve to de-silence lives that are the effect of structures and public issues as well as enabling vision of elements of individual agency and identity therein. My study is not about merely attesting individual emotional strength or vulnerability, but it needed to notice the effect of life contexts (social, cultural, economic, historical, geographical) on the careers of these TAs, thereby being congruent with features of a life course approach.

Giele and Elder's (1998) influential work on methods of life course research developed a design that bridged the relationship between macro and micro social relations and orders. Giele also recognised a relationship between social structures and personalities and 'how individuals consciously try to change the larger society' (ibid, p.7). Elder (1994) had identified four factors that determine the shape of the individual life course:

- Historical time and geographic location
- Social ties to others, linked lives
- Personal control
- Variations in timing

Giele (1995) identified four elements that run parallel to Elder's themes, and were described as:

- Cultural background
- Social integration
- Human agency
- Timing of lives



By interrogating these elements through my research questions, I could get closer to examining and potentially connecting the micro, meso and macro influences on these TAs.

The interviews collected the type of socially textured narratives that life history researchers Clandinin and Connelly (2000) applaud and reflecting how Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) suggested that policy, lives and identity are connected. In my study, valuable data was generated in the interviews through the technique of mapping individual educational histories, key events and decisions made and in recognising directions in their careers. Taking into consideration change that occurs over time, the narratives told were analysed in relation to the structural and policy landscape in which they were experienced. This enabled reflexive analysis of findings and concurred with the view of Dyke, Johnson and Fuller (2012, p.831) that this is '...central to our understanding of the relationships between agency, structure and social change'. Throughout, these three elements recurred and helped to make sense of the stories collected.

### **Reflexive approach**

Reflexivity in a broad sense encompasses understanding lives relative to structures, agency and social change, with a leaning away from singular recognition of one or the other. In this respect, Dyke, Johnson and Fuller (2012, p.831) critiqued Bourdieuan field theory as being too deterministic and recognised Margaret Archer's (2007) concern that social circumstances do not necessarily determine but can shape people's pre-dispositions in educational and career decision-making. This pragmatic position argues that the influences of socio-economic and cultural factors do affect horizons for action, for instance in accessing HE, but can be traversed or filtered by an individual's sense of possibility, whether it is within their consideration, or whether they have support, ability, resources or desire to act on decisions (Dyke et al, 2012, p.832).

A criticism of reflexivity as being a modern concept that is weakened by focus on the individual rather than social groups may be argued, but there is an element of this that is useful to this study in the discovery of how individuals see themselves in relation to the social context (and vice versa) (Dyke et al. 2012). Fuller, Heath and

Johnson (2011), however, also make an argument for these foci being insubstantial as it is only considered from the narrative of the participant, which Fuller's team have evidenced as very often a different narrative to that exposed by family and friends. They use their study to argue for data to be collected through a broader social network to generate more nuance. There is much to support the argument for this rounded approach, particularly when the data is collected over a relatively short period of time. Since this research took a longitudinal approach to data collection, the depth of the data are of a different nature to Fuller et al's study and asked questions that required interrogating the individual's positional stance to their lived lives. Within this, I accept that other family and friends may have different views of the decisions and route choices in their careers, but it is the views of those TAs whose lives are being lived that were sought in this study.

This study called upon a critical analysis of the landscape where these experiences occurred, bringing a particular epistemology with it. I concur with Dyke et al (2012, p1.) that "the concept of reflexivity is central to our understanding of the relationships between agency, structure and social change" and as such it is integral to the research design. This is seen in the choice of methods used in gathering data. The compatibility of the framework used for analysis directly parallels this design intention and is discussed below.

The participants' interviews and the mapping technique (described in the methods chapter) to elicit narratives aimed to consider the possible emergence of new and shared narratives in light of reflections on their learning and career progression. In turn, I needed to be open to such possibilities. Lara (1998), whose research focus is on women's identities, suggests that speech-acts are 'communicative tools' (p.4) that give light to 'new meanings and contest earlier ones' (p.4) and therefore compatible with what I wanted to achieve. Speech-acts are forms of recognition, of mutual understanding, not always resistant, and can provide new ways to fathom past and current injustice – what Lara (after Habermas) recognises as the 'illocutionary force' (p.5). In this respect, Lara's work reflected aspects of what I wanted to achieve in the interviews and analyses, recognising both the agency and structure in individual's life courses and to understand the significance of these experiences over time. The experiences told by the participants in this study were not intended to be just stories, but personal and professional histories that related to the cultural, geographical, social and economic influences of the time. The aspirations described through the

routes of the careers were paralleled with the individuals' understandings of the wider landscape, establishing their horizons for action, encompassing influences from significant others in their lives and their own feelings of their potential at a given time. The theme of 'time' was identified as a priori because of the focus I identified as useful to Careership theory. References to time were intended to be analysed in current and historical terms (linear), but also from the perspective of acknowledging non-linear routes and why they might emerge (Colley, 2007).

Issues arising from forms of recognition from narratives can potentially have an emancipatory outcome for the individuals concerned, the wider audience and in deepening knowledge of the topic. There are, however, ethical challenges, which I needed to consider in relation to a potential disruptive effect, when the unveiling of new understandings occur. These are discussed in the ethics section at the end of the chapter.

### **Temporal influences relevant to the research design**

To confirm the rationale for and the compatibility of the design choices to enable analyses of structure and agency over time, this section firstly identifies issues related to life stages and then the significance of being able to explore the influences of context over time.

#### *Life stages and change*

I needed to take into account age in relation to structural opportunities and constraints in society, with my cohort being, specifically, mature entrants to HE and having experienced earlier education in a different political and social context. Once again, the life course paradigm encompassed understandings of changing conditions relative to age and across time. Life stages (for instance, the traditional order of pairing, marriage, childbearing) are increasingly being seen in atypical patterns and can happen earlier or later than traditional social norms or expectations (Elder and Giele, 2009; Milesi, 2010). Individual stories can open the possibility of understanding intersections in life and capture how and why particular pathways were followed, an aim of this research.

A life course study considers the interplay of social and structural dimensions as central and without which, White-Riley (in Giele and Elder, 1998, p.50) argued, results in 'reductionism' and diminished findings. Longitudinal studies, outside of life

course studies and ethnographies, do not necessarily attend to the context of how life is lived. I selected my methodology to be compatible with a theoretical position that considers social contexts, individual lives and careers as inseparably interrelated and multi-layered, and that are understood to change over time. Goodson (2013, p.5) refers to this in his research on teachers' lives as 'the genealogy of context where people construct life stories differently in specific historical circumstances'. It is worth bearing in mind that in contrast to non-western cultures, western perceptions of time and temporal experiences are more linear and presume orderliness, particularly in historical consciousnesses (White, 1973; 2014). Wilschut (2012, p.72) identified western time as being seen by non-westerners as a 'homogenous, continuous, linear and exactly measurable phenomenon'. This is at odds with the way memory actually stores temporal information, 'contextually and associatively' (ibid,p.105).

### *Time and timing*

The critical perspective I drew on to conceptualise time was similar in some respects to Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) thoughts on time and agency in that individual dispositions and pre-dispositions (habitus) are also seen through a structural lens that allows or constrains agency within the field. Where past and present meet there is latent potential for individuals to change or pursue a future outcome. This is evident in Careership theory, but my concern when designing the methodology was ensuring the visibility of the conditions of latent potential and how it was actualised, hence the mapping techniques.

In Abbott's study on temporality in 'Time Matters' (2001), he recognised that in analysis, assumptions are regularly made in three areas:

- Causes and events
- Actors and interaction
- Time and meaning

These assumptions seem to support an insistence on narrowed choices, predominantly being made in expected or normative ways. Many career models and expectations that are adopted in policy direction are based on assumptions made in these areas and are critiqued as resembling folk theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). The frequently used descriptor of 'trajectory' in life course routes is 'not ... a free trajectory, but rather follows a path whose twists and turns are a result of

complex interactions between a “minded self” and an environment’ (Clausen in Giele and Elder, 1998, p.196). Despite academic perspectives critiquing policy-makers’ understandings, normative patterns still dominate policy (Elder, 1994; Colley, 2007). In doing so, the dominant clock-based time culture fails to recognise other temporal aspects and Bryson (2007, p.100) insists that:

Tackling the dominant time culture and asserting the value of other kinds of time is a critical political step that casts fresh light on current inequalities and opens up new ways of thinking about a more humane and equitable society.

My reflexive ontology was both congruent and relevant in noticing non-normative patterns in the data, as an individual and in a wider social context and also in the continual reflection of issues raised in data collection and analysis.

Colley (2007) built on Adam’s (1989) recognition of how women’s lives, in particular, are distinctive in their requirement to consider the material context of their lives, as well as the historical. This had relevance to the gender of my participants, all of whom were female, and it was relevant to acknowledge this throughout the analysis of the data. Colley (2007) also argued for a focus on the dimension of aspects of time in understanding women’s lives, rather than singularly on change in transitions. She follows the argument that women’s time is used differently to men’s and it is experienced in ‘engendered and enacted social practices’ (p.427) and these need to be noticed and recorded in life course histories. The participants all had family responsibilities, all but two had children and primary responsibility for childcare arrangements, school runs and so on, even when their partner or parents helped out. In order to capture these intersecting activities and influences, I layered the oral interview data with the consideration of the time in which it occurred. By introducing the use of time and satisfaction lines to show when events and experiences happened across their life course, it was then possible to parallel these with an educational policy timeline that mapped those influences on the horizons for their action at a particular time. Their social narratives were woven into the historical picture and aided explanation of what was influencing and occurring for these participants at different points in their lives. Elder and Pellerin’s (in Giele and Elder, 1998) use of data archives similarly confirmed the importance of the effects of macro level historical change on individual lives. The macro, meso and micro context in this

study could then be linked closely with the participant's own life-courses and compared with each other.

## **The theoretical framework**

### *Careership theory*

This section discusses Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) as my central critical framework for analysis. This encompasses individual and universal claims to understand how latent potential, or horizons for action, change as time goes by. I have supplemented Careership theory with a stronger lens on the temporal to understand the influence of time and timing. I did this initially by generating evidence through low-directed, participant- and researcher-led mapping techniques.

My strategy was to explore mid-career educators and drew on the subtleties and nuances extracted from their individual stories in order to illuminate layered cultural complexities (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). These were particular to these TAs' previous education, career development, social context and their aspirations. The model of Careership (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, p.41), a sociological theory of decision-making, notices dimensions of the individual, of cultural and political influences, as well as seemingly unpredictable decisions we make at different times in life. The model is theoretically based on the Bourdieuan concept of 'capital' where your place in the 'field' and the contextual 'habitus' (see below) is magnified. It includes acknowledgement of the significance of the familial, local context and policy influences, alongside pragmatic rather than unplanned decisions.

### *Bourdieu: field, habitus and capital*

Whilst I am not using Bourdieu as a single or primary theoretical framework, understanding Bourdieu's concepts as tools in analysis within Careership model is important. I now outline how I have used the concepts of 'field', 'habitus' and 'capital' in relation to Careership theory.

- Field

Fields are arenas of social action that are coded by rules and power relations. In Bourdieuan terms, a person's strength in relation to others is influenced by a person's relative position in that field and is continually in flux. Bourdieu focused principally on class as key in these structures, whereas Careership theory also sees other influences such as gender or ethnicity as equally important. However, like

Bourdieu's concepts, Careership theory is used as a thinking tool, rather than as a grand theory (Jenkins, 2002; 2006).

- Habitus

Bourdieu's habitus reflects socially constructed mental and behavioural practices that are acted upon without outward consciousness. They are influenced by tacit codes of behaviours, shared dispositions or patterns of action that people form through presence in a specific social context. People are accepted by expressing similar ways of valued behaviours, such as the way they are dressed, the way they speak, or in displaying codes in social participation and interactions. The embodiment of habitus refers to unconsciously subsumed habits and codes, rather than those consciously learnt. Habitus connects socio-economic conditions of class with patterns of action to form shared dispositions or social reactions and practices (Cuff, Sharrock & Francis, 2006). Wacquant addressed others' criticism of Bourdieu's denial of the ability of people to be agentic in their choices by arguing that rational choice is possible 'but ... it is habitus itself that commands this option. We can always say that individuals make choices, as long as we do not forget that they do not choose the principle of these choices' (Wacquant, 1989, p.45). In this study the changes over time in relation to the habitus were noted in analysis.

- Capital

The concept of capital is more than economics, it is about forms of valued symbolic exchange, such as in cultural and social capitals and the relative power they produce. Within a field there are dynamic variances in power relations and the acquisition of capital over time forms the habitus. The three forms of cultural capital are i) objectified (as in acquisition & knowledge of valued cultural goods), ii) institutionalised, and iii) embodied (dispositions and the inculcation of culture, which takes effort and time). In Bourdieu's chapter 'Forms of Capital' (in Richardson, 1986) he argued that when understanding the value of educational qualifications, one also needs to recognise its value as dependent on previous investment by family and its associated accumulated social capital. This combined investment needs to also be done at individual levels. Bourdieu (in Richardson, 1986, p.283) explains this is seen in the investment in lust for knowledge:

The work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement), an effort that presupposes a personal cost (on paie de sa personne, as we say in French), an investment, above all of time, but also of that socially

constituted form of libido, libido sciendi, with all the privation, renunciation, and sacrifice that it may entail.

I also bear in mind the possible ‘fragmentation and piecemeal appropriations [of Bourdieu’s work] that have obfuscated the systematic nature of his enterprise’ (Wacquant, 1989, p. 27). Critics such as Jenkins consider Bourdieu’s perspective too deterministic. Careership theory does not interpret Bourdieu’s sociological theory as dualistic, a criticism often attributed to his work, but which was also strongly refuted by Wacquant (1989). Instead, it enables an analysis of practices and dispositions to reveal the structures affecting the habitus. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997, p.41) forwarded their model to consider aspects of ‘the nature of identity, the relationship between structure and agency and even qualitative research methodology’ in social science research. Through individual narratives, the macro context is also noticed, that is, the influences that shape our cultural and political worlds, as well as recognising the non-linear and seemingly non-rationalised choices at meso and micro levels that are also made. This ‘bridge’ between social structure and individual agency offers a way to see the social world (Maton in Grenfell, 2012, p. 49).

#### *Careership explained*

The Careership model follows the Bourdieuan principal that structural and social factors determining social reproduction protect some, but also severely limits choices for others. This served to help me explore why some TAs can navigate a career route to teaching and others find it much harder or impossible. Hodkinson and Sparkes’s model (1997) acknowledged the role of agency and individuals as decision-makers, whilst also applying a precise focus to where decision-making may be societally or structurally influenced, yet invisible. I illuminate this intermediary zone in my study by the use of visual data collection and representation techniques, to show how past events and ideas of future possibilities interject when decisions are made at specific times in the life course.

Inherent in Hodkinson and Sparkes’ earliest (1997) model were three dimensions where decisions are made:

- Through pragmatic or rational decision-making
- By decisions influenced by interactions with others in the field and by the inequality in life course capital
- In unpredictable decision-making at specific ‘turning points’



The third element was different to happenstance or seemingly unplanned decisions, rather it followed an understanding that there are events in life that generate a turn in direction. Hodkinson (2008) later admitted that given further consideration, this perspective was limited and should not ignore the middle ground between an individual's agency and their position in a social field that can also constrain or embolden choice; it is significant to my study that Careership theory notices that this changes over time. The significance of turning points was reviewed when Hodkinson revisited the model in 2008 showing concern that these implied quick decisions that suddenly changed, rather than focusing on the way that past and current experiences and positionings, alongside future aspirations effect development over time, thereby making careers and decisions much more non-linear. It became apparent after the longitudinal study 'Learning Lives' (Biesta et al, 2011), in which Hodkinson was involved, that the relationships between agentic and structural dimensions were significant; within this complex middle ground, conditions that were enabled or constrained by unequal forces were identified and analysed. Hodkinson argued that, instead of attending to 'turning points', greater focus should be attended to 'horizons for action', which had been previously underplayed. The possibilities and restraints of decisions are thereby recognised. The horizons for action, explained below, became important to the framework used in this study.

As a contribution to Careership theory, and encouraged by the authors' open invitation to researchers to extend the use of the framework, I introduced a specific visual method of data collection (detailed in Chapter 4) to capture the embodied experiences of the participants that then became central to the framework to analyse the data collected and to understand how 'time in learning' (Colley, 2007) was integral to the opportunities that existed for the participants. The concept of horizons for action was an area in Careership theory that Hodkinson 're-visited' in 2008 to emphasise this aspect more fully in light of new thought on the complexities of 'time' in longitudinal studies.

### *Horizons for action*

A hitherto maligned aspect of Careership that Hodkinson brought to the fore in his 2008 lecture was the concept of 'horizons for action' (2008). Careership theory was now defined as having three overlapping dimensions:

- the embodied positions and dispositions of individuals
- the relations between forces in a field and the field in which it occurs
- the life course on longitudinal pathways

The on-going dynamics across these dimensions is complex and changes over time. Hodkinson acknowledged that the third dimension was the least developed area theoretically and suggested that both the relational forces and where you were in the field at any one time impacted on career directions taken over a life course. The metaphor of 'horizons for action' reflected the possibilities afforded to an individual to act in relation to the agential and structural opportunities and constraints in their field at any particular time. The horizon is also affected by their historical (time) and geographical positioning as well as their disposition. This became a valuable aspect of the framework for illumination of influences effecting the TAs and their career routes. There is potential limitation in Careership theory if the recognition of the effect of time is ignored and Hodkinson (2008) recognised and argued for the development of the theory and utilisation of it in other contexts.

Where public and private meet, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) argue a lens is needed to illuminate cultural perspectives and to make visible what is different and varied within sub-cultural groupings, as opposed to that which focuses on the stereotype of a sub-group. This compatibility with Lara's influence discussed earlier, suggests that it was apt to collect and explore data likely to shine light on these kind of relationships in the TAs' experiences.

The recognition of an area linking structural and agentic influences in people's decision-making allows the researcher to explore the idiosyncrasies, the folds, those under-the-surface decisions, that influence the direction or pursuit of interests and careers. Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) view, that stereotypical separations hide attributes and dispositions within groups, is interesting and where I focussed finding a method to gather this data effectively. Hodkinson (2008) asserted that it is often

folk theory, based on false assumptions, that drives policy and management and these false assumptions in career trajectories can be interrogated and explained using the theory.

Careership theory encourages effective analysis of these areas to exact data from the macro through to the micro fields at play. I have argued how this theory was likely to enable the identification of unequal forces in individuals' 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson, 2008, p.35) and recognise how decisions are enabled and restricted by relational forces. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) asked researchers to be free to adapt this theory to suit varying contexts and I have therefore applied a focus on a concept that is alert to non-linear time in the analysis.

To conclude this rationale for the methodology, I now revisit the intentions of the research and summarise its aims and re-state the research questions.

### **Contribution to the research field**

The research contributes to:

- Knowledge on educational and career routes to teacher status by teaching assistants entering HE with non-standard qualifications (Empirical).
- The enhancement of Careership theory, through the use of graphical data collection and analysis (Theoretical).
- Understanding effects of structure and agency over time, with a focus on the interrelationship of policy, agency and time within a context (Conceptual).

### **Research questions**

The key areas of interest in this study were covered by the following research questions:

- How do teaching assistants negotiate a career route to teacher status?
- What factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path?

The research questions required a descriptive response, a subjective narrative that explains the in/significance for the TA, as well as awareness of when and where the

story is located in historical and social contexts. The mapping technique, to locate the historical era and geographical location of when (time) and where (location) these influences had impact, was useful to enrich the textual and narrative evidence that attempts to explain this. I intended to focus on a specific aspect of interest in this research, one that encouraged recognition and consideration of the effect of a non-linear notion of time on the data collected. However, to capture relevant information it requires subjective responses of individuals' experience. When the timings of the events or experiences were located, it was then possible to notice parallel policy or social effects that had influence. Careership theory became a tool by which to analyse each of these areas. Question 2 delves deeper into the participant's consciousness and their ontological stance. A reflexive consideration of the TAs' sense of (re-)positioning over time is difficult to extract in a relatively short interview, but the narratives that followed the graphical mark-making on participants' own timeline enabled a way to also expose affective influences and their role in shaping their career decisions.

To enable the research questions to be answered, I have defined an interpretivist paradigm that is designed to be aware of both subjective realities (constructed through power relations) and material realities (contextualised in history) in the use of life course histories and which is analysed through critically reflexive theory (Careership). The flexible modes of data collection used resulted in data to inform an area in literature that has, as yet, been sparse and offers a novel approach to collecting and analysing hidden data.

Before Chapter 4 details the methods used, I turn to a discussion related to the ethical considerations for this study.

## **Ethics**

### **Insider research and positionality**

In addressing my positioning & potential biases, I begin this section by reflecting on my location as researcher to both the topic and the participants, as my positionality effects the philosophy and approach of this research. I too was a mature entrant to HE (in 2004) and completed the same BA(Hons) programme to which this study refers. I had entered HE at foundation level (Cert Ed) ten years previously (rather than on the Foundation degree route as these TAs) and re-commenced undergraduate studies whilst in a learning support role in my early/mid 40s. I subsequently became lecturer in some modules to my participants.

My research was instigated by reflexive considerations of the participants' parallel and differing experiences to mine, exposing how particular historical and current contexts can influence flow, stagnation or slippery movement within the social, political and educational systems in which life experiences unfold. Within this unfolding, I wanted to reveal what conditions were needed to traverse such contexts. By interrogating this line of enquiry, there could be an ethical tension between potentially gaining otherwise hidden insights and the effect of troublesome disclosure. At the same time, I needed to guard against misrepresentation of the content of the narratives. Power relation issues are often cited with former tutor/student relationships and this also needed reflective consideration. At the time of interview, each of the participants had left the institution where I worked. We had previously had good, working relationships, as often mature students do with their tutors, and they appeared keen and at ease. However, it had to be borne in mind that this former relationship could have an influence on what was selected to be told to me. As Bruner (1993) confirmed, the narrated life is not and never can be, the life as lived, but it can give insights to experiences of their version of histories to illustrate wider social change. The semi-structured interview questions were aimed at directing the conversation towards particular topics, but also flexible where participants could reveal, or not, what they wished. In three of the interviews emotional, personal information was shared in order to fill in the context of the narrative. I have alluded to these in broad terms, as life events, but not in detail; there were no safe-guarding issues, but identification of participants would have been made more likely with more detail shared. There was also a sense of intrusion

in referring to these private reflections in analysis, so I have kept these to a minimum by attempting to find ways of 'reconciling apparently conflicting principles' (Thompson, 2019) and yet not leaving it as unheard.

The translation of data in analysis also needed the ethical dimensions to be considered with 'theoretical consciousness' (Ransome, 2013, p. 2). From this critically reflexive ontology it does not support social research being entirely 'saturated with opinion' (p.3). It calls on choices of methods and methodologies to reach the data being searched. Consideration of the method of data collection was integral to my design, acknowledging Ransome's recognition that 'different kinds of interviewing produce different kinds of data' (p.3) and by directly employing strategies that prioritise small-scale techniques to elicit credible data that would not be possible on a large scale. Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) noted that there is a responsibility to both represent and protect the participant if they expose troublesome narratives or raise safeguarding issues and, in addition, cautioned researchers against sensationalising or being over emotive when using individual's narratives in analysis. A former ninth participant asked to withdraw her data at the time of the second interview, she was now uncomfortable with previously revealed information. Her assurance that her withdrawal was not connected to the process was reassuring for the study and there followed a telephone discussion relating to the personal issue raised and its unlikely but possible revelation. Data stored was deleted and taken out of the text in the thesis.

Given the nature of the topics, names of places and people have been omitted or in the case of the participants, given pseudonyms. Yet, using the participant-drawn mapping is still problematic in that it is so densely encoded with locators that it was not possible to display these as a whole, hence the snapshot examples given (see Figure 1 Examples from a drawn timeline).

As in all educational research in the UK, the BERA ethical guidelines are adhered to as well as the advice from leaders in the field of narrative inquiry and the approval of the Ethics Panel for the School of Education at the University.

The Data Protection Act (1998) requires data to be relevant to the requirements of the research and it was securely stored in relation to general data protection regulation (GDPR) (Voight and Von Dem Bussche, 2017) guidance. This is detailed in the Methods Chapter and evidenced in the consent forms (Appendix 2.1, Appendix 2.2; Appendix 2.3).

In summary, this covers:

- Confidentiality of data and data protection – Whilst all discussion was anonymous, concerns related to well-being and safeguarding would follow University guidance. Data was anonymised and censored where locality or identity was possible to be identified. All materials were kept in secure cloud-based password protected and University approved digital formats.
- Access and consent – participants discussed and signed to agree consent within the parameters described.
- Withdrawal from research – participants could withdraw from the research at any time. This was articulated in the participant forms and associated discussion.

Additionally, there are challenges from the researcher's perspective in the following areas, which are addressed in the exposition of the methods in the next chapter:

- In guarding the level of inference made in analysis.
- Awareness that the evidence gained was willing evidence (that is, only what the participant wished to impart).
- Accuracies in reporting.
- Participant expectation and time commitment
- Issues of anonymity

The next chapter details the methods and procedures of the research and in doing so addresses the attendant issues raised above.

## **Chapter 4 Data collection methods**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explains the sampling procedure and outlines a chronological schedule of the data collection methods. The process that is most central to the data collection, and subsequently used in the analysis of data, is a visual and graphic elicitation and representation technique, used alongside the semi-structured questioning. This method of data collection is firstly justified and then the process explained. The initial processing and transcribing of the data, with visual examples, concludes the chapter and lays the path for the subsequent analytic procedures, which are specified in Chapter 5.

### **Sampling**

The sample falls into the cohort of 94% of part-time students in England (first degree, undergraduate and postgraduate) who are also over the age of 21 (HESA, 2018). This ratio remained constant within 1% between 2012-2017. The gender balance across subject specialisms is currently a 60% female:40% male ratio (HESA, 2018), whereas this sample is all female, due to the markedly low male participation in this route. This is exemplified by the data from the University in this study that had only two males enrolled on the FD over the period of its availability.

In this study, the participants, at first interview, were between 25 and 40 years old. They were a purposeful sample of eight teaching assistants (originally nine) with common features of entering HE as mature students at Foundation level and then continuing studies to BA/ BA(Hons) level and all but one concluded study with a post graduate teaching qualification. The period of HE studies fell between 2006 and 2017. I followed their career routes for at least two years from graduation from their first degree.

In some respects, the sample was conveniently opportune because of my practical access to a group of former TAs that I had taught at some point in their HE studies. There had been earlier communication to try to locate the job destinations for alumni and to see what people were doing now for marketing purposes. Their responses were part of the trigger that led me to explore their career paths despite the ethical dilemmas that were discussed earlier in relation to closeness and power relations with the participants.



Since I am interested in similarities and differences in the experiences of this specific group, I remained flexible as to the number of participants I used in selecting a sample size. I needed to negotiate a saturation point so emergent patterns had the opportunity to be revealed (Sykes, 2006). A flexible design, a feature of this methodology, allowed for this. When one participant withdrew after three years, I was still able to delete associated data from records and text in the thesis. Some data exemplifying particular themes and issues were disappointing to have to eradicate as they had provided rich content, but the technical aspect was relatively straight forward. I confirmed the erasure to the former participant when this was completed.

### Introduction to the participants

The eight participants were born between 1969 and 1990 and by the final update of data at 2019, their ages ranged between 29 and 51. A ninth participant withdrew from the study and is now not represented anywhere in the study. Jess is currently employed by a University and the others all reached Teacher status between 2012 (Josie) and 2016 (Anna, Jasmine and Katie). All participants were born in England and live in the North of England. Participants were given pseudonyms and have been colour-coded for ease of recognition in visual diagrams.

Pseudonym	Year of birth	Age at FD entry	Age at Teacher status	Age at end of study 2019
Anna	1968	41	47	51
Ronnie	1969	40	45	50
Amanda	1972	34	40	47
Jess	1973	37	N/A	46
Josie	1974	32	40	45
Jasmine	1981	29	35	38
Claudine	1988	31	28	31
Katie	1990	19	26	29

Table 2 Participants' profiles

All the participants began their FD at the same University between 2006 and 2010. Seven participants completed a BA(Hons) at the same University, though not all choosing the same 'top-up' degree and one participant transferred to another

University for a top-up including Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The other teacher training routes were various and detailed in the participant profiles (Appendix 3). Appendix 3 offers fuller narratives of the profiles of the participants, introducing their context and their narratives to the reader and a rounder picture, but below are brief insights to the participants contexts.

## **Participant profiles**

### *Katie*

Katie's father was a steel worker but wanted more for his children and both parents saw this happening through education. Katie's sister was seen as the 'academic' one but as a young child Katie was confident. She liked physical education, art and maths but found literacy hard and still does. Her mum was at home at first and then had some part-time jobs then later when into banking. Grandad was a painter decorator and tutored all his grandchildren in German and maths. Katie was put on a Connexions course at high school as she was thought to be underachieving and this boosted her confidence. Work placement took her to a primary school and she decided she'd like to teach. Katie got nine A-C GCSEs and went to college to do childcare and education (level 3), which included a placement in school. From 16, Katie lived with her father, supporting him emotionally after divorce. After college she started at university but only stayed a few months. She became a TA on supply and then became permanent. In 2008 Katie started the FD supported by school but a new head teacher did not support the continuation to BA so she managed to pay the fees herself. The unsalaried Schools Direct PGCE followed and she moved in with her mum. Katie is in a year 2 post and is ICT lead. At 2019, Katie had just moved houses and was on maternity leave with her first child.

### *Jess*

Jess' parents were both nurses and she spent her early years on a small UK island before moving to England when Jess was seven. Her favourite subjects were English and drama and she still doesn't like maths. Jess saw school as a social venue and was pleased to leave and earn a wage in retail, despite her parents wanting her to take A-levels. A short spell on a beauty course was not what she wanted, neither was a stint at a dental surgery. After a few months unemployed Jess

began a seasonal job in retail, worked hard and was made permanent. Her parents divorced at this time and Jess lived with her dad until he moved. Jess then moved in with her now husband, married and held a part-time retail job whilst her children were young. Her middle child died at eighteen months old and in re-adjusting to life she began to do voluntary work at school and then a level two course. Her first TA job was in 2008 and had she had strong support from the head teacher to follow the FD and BA. Jess found HE study and work transformative but the level of demands and stresses in the job increasing. Jess did not have a GCSE science subject so was not able to apply for teacher training, despite getting a very high first-class degree and a University award. At 2019, Jess had begun work at a university as Student Education Services Officer (Assessment).

### *Josie*

Josie's mother was a hairdresser, her father a site manager in construction. She has one brother. Josie remembers the joy of play as a young child in a small school in a former mining village. She developed an interest in athletics and sport at middle school and was encouraged by her teacher. However, she did well across the subjects. On arriving at secondary school Josie had to have time off for an operation and said that this threw her off track. Josie was asked to leave school just before her GCSEs as she became pregnant. Her maths teacher offered tuition and organised for a colleague to teach her English so she could take her exams in the re-sits. She began work as a pharmacy assistant and stayed there as she got married and had a second child. Josie then began to help at school and then did a nursery assistant course and a 'Helping in Schools' course. In 2005 she applied for a TA role at the school she volunteered at, having been unsuccessful in applying to local nurseries. School encouraged Josie to do the FD and it took some time for her confidence in her abilities to emerge. She continued to the BA course and was able to do the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) and is now a mentor for new teachers. For the first time, Josie applied for a job in another city as the family moved. Her current role is as Academy Teaching Specialist, raising standards in maths. She is excited about continuing her professional development in education. Josie had moved out of the area by 2019 and did not respond to contact.

### *Anna*

Anna's father was an engineer and for a short time, when she was three or four years old they emigrated to New Zealand. Her mum had a number of clerical and service part-time jobs. Anna mainly recalled ways of teaching and learning from school days that were very prescriptive and with some anecdotes of salty food and mean teachers. Her history teacher stood out for her for the passion he had for his subject. Anna failed her A-levels at college and spoke of the absence of quality career direction and said her friends and parents hadn't ever considered university as an option. Anna worked in a bank for seven years until the birth of her two daughters. She began childminding and volunteered at school and became a lunchtime supervisor supporting a child with behavioural issues and then supporting children with special educational needs. Anna did this for the next thirteen years. In 2009 Anna began the FD followed by the BA and then enrolled on an unpaid SCITT programme with PGCE. Her husband was earning enough for them to manage and Anna is now re-paying the student loan. Anna's first teaching job in Reception became challenging due to an unpleasant co-teacher and Anna moved schools taking a maternity leave job and working more collegiately, though as maternity cover, with years one and three. Anna then worked in year six for two years. At 2019, Anna is a teacher in year three at a newly formed Academy.

### *Amanda*

Amanda's mother gave up training to be a teacher when she was born. Her father was from German/Russian heritage. Amanda's mother sent her to school away from the local council estate but she felt left out. Poor experiences at school with teachers led her to label herself as a rebel. She enjoyed the social aspect of school but did not take lessons seriously. At 13 her mother had a breakdown and she didn't go to school much for about a year and she left home as she fell out with her brother. Family friends took her in until her father contacted her and she went to live with him. Her aunt and uncle helped to catch her up with English and maths and she achieved three grade Cs in these subjects at GCSE. Amanda took a Certificate in pre-vocational education in the sixth form along with a work placement with an insurance company, where she continued to work on leaving school. Amanda is married and

had two children. Whilst they were young, she did a number of night classes to gain more GCSEs and worked a variety of part time jobs. In 2004 she did a childcare course at college and got a part-time TA job. The FD began in 2006 whilst working as a dyslexia tutor. After completing a BA she did a PGCE at the University her mother had completed her training. She said it took numerous re-sits ( no longer allowed) to get the IT test for the PGCE. She was able to afford this because her husband was working and she had help from his parents. Amanda had worked five years in years three and four but did not respond to contact in 2019.

### *Jasmine*

Jasmine remembers a lot of playing as a young child and being keen on arts and crafts. Later she became interested in science but found languages difficult. She took ten GCSEs, including Urdu, originally learnt through her mum though without any additional support. Her father came to the UK at the age of ten and was aware of societal barriers in language. She perceived being identified by school with English as a second language inaccurate and lost confidence in studies. Despite achieving three grade Bs at A-level, Jasmine withdrew her university application, worried that she may not succeed. Instead she worked for an insurance company moving from one job to another for about eight years then began volunteering in a local school. Her siblings both went to university. In 2010 she became a TA and started the FD, intending to complete studies with the RTP. The head teacher was enormously supportive and ultimately offered her a Schools Direct with PGCE place in school after completing her BA(Hons). Jasmine is married but does not have children. At 2019, Jasmine was in her third year as a primary school teacher.

### *Ronnie*

Ronnie has little recall of early schooling and only some of secondary school recalling places and people rather than the learning. She had a flamboyant Russian teacher and took GCSE maths early. She left school at 16 on a Youth Training Scheme and worked in a bank for the next 22 years. She had two children (2001 and 2004) and began volunteering at a friend's pre-school on her days off (2 per week) taking a National Vocational Qualification in nursery nursing. She became one of six

TAs in her local school in 2008 and has stayed at the same school. She began her FD in 2009 and was 'devastated' when the GTP was cut in her final year. She found an eighteen-month top-up course with QTS 80 miles away. She has a strong affinity with maths and science subjects, but it has taken a long time to re-build confidence academically. She says she missed out on family time because of study and has had a lot of help from her husband and parents. At 2019 Ronnie was a class teacher with responsibility for a year 4 trainee on her final placement.

### *Claudine*

Claudine remembers spending a lot of time with her mum, a former factory worker when very young, whilst her dad was at work. She attended a small, rural school where she still lives. Her mum worked evenings and weekends in a variety of jobs until her sister was born seven years later. Claudine loved maths, English and PE. At Middle school maths became harder and she admitted to finding it funny to be sent out of science classes. School was a place to meet her friends saying, 'they were everything to me'. She describes her parents as non-academic, but supportive of education. Her mum was cross when she got her poor GCSE results. Her two gains in English (Grade Bs) meant that college accepted her on a BTEC course in social care. Claudine did not get her preferred place at the local University, so decided not to go and instead worked unhappily in a private nursery and took distance learning and GCSE qualifications. Later she worked in the Prison Service as a tutor and volunteered in a primary school. Claudine began her FD in 2009 and went on to top up with an Early Years degree, as the preferred Primary route was not an option. In 2014 she had her first child and her husband supported her to continue to teacher training in an unpaid Schools Direct route. This caused her to go into debt due to childcare costs. In 2016 she had her first teaching job in Year 2 and considers returning to do a Masters degree one day. By 2019, she had worked one year at an FE College teaching maths but left due to 'excessive workload and pressure' and now works at a SEND college and has plans for a small business in teaching practical crafts.

Before outlining the structure of the whole thesis, the following section gives an overview of the direction of educational policy directly effecting FDs and TAs in relation to time, place, social, economic and political contexts from around 1997.

### **The research timeline**

Before commencing the study, the participants were emailed to ask if they were interested in participating. Details of the purpose of the study and what it entailed in terms of their time and the content were included. I met with each participant before the interview, some by telephone and some face-to-face depending on their availability to outline the aims of the study and to guide them through questions. We agreed by signing forms and planning an interview time.

Appendix 2.1; Appendix 2.2 & Appendix 2.3 display the related documents sent, discussed and agreed:

- Request to participate letter
- Participant information sheet
- Participant consent form

The interviews took place in different venues, some in their workplace, some in a quiet café, some at the university in a booked small room and one in a participant's home. The interviews were audio recorded, with permission. After the initial agreement meeting and the first interview, I listened to the recordings and met again with the participants to clarify points or add to the previous responses.

The data, initially collected in the semi-structured interviews and follow up meeting, occurred between October and December 2015 and were planned again between November 2018 and January 2019. The initial plan to interview after a two-year gap was delayed for nine months by my suspension from studies. Due to the non-availability of some participants in the busy autumn term and the rich data set that I had already, I reviewed the first interviews and follow up meetings and decided to ask for some specific 'missing' information to be emailed to me (Appendix 4) instead. All participants responded. In discussion with my supervisor, given the richness of

the existing data, I concluded that the individually modified update had more than enough detail to continue useful and purposeful analytical work.

In the next section of this chapter, the research methods are introduced. I argue that the use of visual and graphic representation techniques is compatible to this methodology and then explain the methods and processes I used to collect, organise, compare and differentiate data. Early examples of data that aimed at enhancing the oral interview are used as illustration.

### **Visual and graphic elicitation and representation techniques**

In this research, visual representations of data and the findings were used to illustrate complex connections and variances in the participants' lives and were presented through both manual and computer-generated data organisation and displays. The process of analysis is examined in Chapter 5. Here, I explain why a participant-led manual visual data collection method was selected to facilitate depth of discussion in the interviews.

Drawing techniques in research are inconsistently described, for example, as graphic representation, ideography, diagramming, mapping ... and most often used to complement and contextualise other modes of data collection, such as semi-structured interviews. Prior to the mid 2000s, graphic elicitation techniques to collect data in interviews as opposed to use in analysis and reporting, became more popular (Umoquit et al, 2011), though are still not entirely commonplace. My research method does not intend to be radical in approach but uses a method that is novel and conducive as a thinking tool to enhance and elicit data in interview and then present as 'visual stories of information' (Hartel, 2014). This is achieved by representing and paralleling the results of the data collections and analyses both individually and collectively.

Visual research methods have been in use since the mid 1960s, most often in the fields of anthropology and sociology, initially and primarily using photographic and film-based records to *illustrate* phenomena, rather than being used as a data collection method. After a period of contention, as epitomised by Goldstein (2007) in 'All Photos Lie', and with the critique that it is easy to manipulate or mis-read images, there was a desire for a theoretical framework to bridge the gap between mere



illustration and trustworthy visual methods of data collection, interpretation, representation and presentation (Prosser and Loxley, 2008). From the 1990s, the expansion in the use of this method in research ran parallel to the rapid development of visual modes of communication, through the exponential development of digital capacities and the sophisticated use of ideographic images in advertising and media. The medium of representation through image, in data collection, analysis and presentation of findings, comes in various forms. Researcher-created or participant-created visual data can be through, for example, sketches, diagrams, codes, numbers and produced as, for example, charts, images, drawings, maps with the said capacity to search 'beyond text' (Prosser and Loxley, 2008, np); they are often used, as here, in mixed method approaches.

Alongside coding the transcriptions of the audio recorded interview data, I also used:

- A participant-generated graphic elicitation technique in interviews (participant-created timelines with satisfaction rating)
- Visual organisation of individual and collective timelines and satisfaction in charts (researcher-created relational maps)
- Visual representations of timelines paralleling educational policy with participants' educational lives (researcher created relational maps)

In this research, the satisfaction mapping across a timeline, drawn by the participant, aimed to enable deeper discussion of how the processes they described felt, how they were experienced. The participants were given scaffolded instructions of how to draw their timelines and satisfaction lines, intending to support their confidence but not being too prescriptive (Prosser and Loxley, 2008). Knowles and Cole (2007) agreed that benefits of using visual methods include 'seeking out non-discursive knowledge that is epistemologically, theoretically and methodologically different from text only approaches' (Prosser and Loxley, 2008, p.35) and it allows insight to sensorial experiences of people that are not easily accessible through discourse. They also posit that 'respondents may feel less pressured when discussing sensitive topics through an intermediary artefact, since informants do not speak directly about a sensitive topic but work through a material go-between (e.g. a doll, toy, line drawings, story book, or photographs) through which they are able to express difficult memories and powerful emotions' (p.23). To make use of these advantages,

I enabled the participants to create their own timelines that explicated their experiences and their affective reflections, as detailed below.

### The interviews

First, participants were asked to talk through their educational life from birth to the current day whilst tracking and labelling a timescale with a marker pen on an A1 sheet of paper. They were asked to notate significant markers along a timeline running horizontally along the bottom of the long side of the paper (x axis). All participants are in the teaching profession, so found the mechanics of this method natural and unproblematic as they signposted specific events as they spoke. However, one participant opted not to use this method and instead preferred to sit and talk. Then, participants were asked to use the vertical axis (y) as a low/high measure of life satisfaction and draw a single line, relative to their affective response to the experiences they had identified, whilst they described their reasoning. I suggested that they took midway on the scale as a starting point at birth, unless they wished to represent that differently. Lines were then drawn by the participants as their subjective representations over time. They were intended to ‘stimulate(s) participants to recall knowledge and experiences, which can complement and extend data collected through the interviewing process’ (Copeland and Agosto, 2012, p.514). In and of itself, this method may not have served to stimulate thoughts without the context of the subject material and timeline to locate it, but it did serve to enable the collection of relational maps showing common signifiers across time, such as experience at school, in first jobs, HE experience etcetera; these could then be analysed singularly, paralleled with the interview audio recordings and also viewed as a collective response.

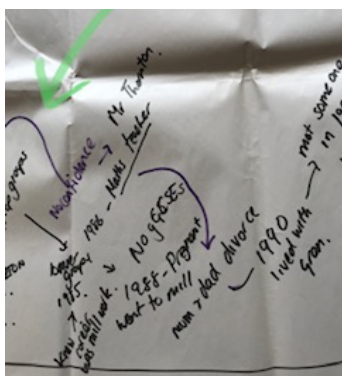
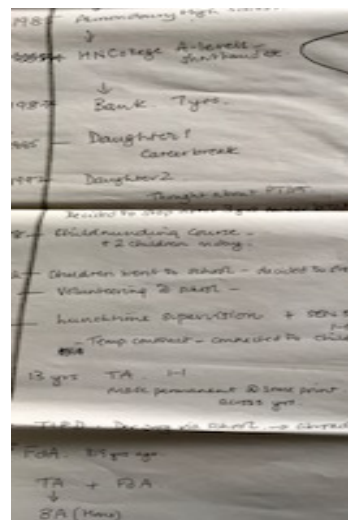


Figure 1 Examples from a drawn timeline

Edited to ensure confidentiality. Green arrow identifies part of the satisfaction curve in purple.



The same documents were used in the second update meeting that happened within a month of the first interview to add any additional information.

There is no consensus on transcribing visual data, much is improvised (Prosser and Loxley, 2008), but the method I used to detail the process follows.

### Process of transcribing visual data.

The key nodes from each of the timeline/satisfaction diagrams were identified and logged on an excel spreadsheet by date for events: birth, pre-school, infant school, junior school, high school, post-16, work, work in educational contexts, college, University, PGCE course, teacher status. These nodes were consistent with descriptors given by each of the participants. In order to compare the participants' experiences at these times, each timeline was graphed to capture the level of satisfaction from a low/high scale 0-4 at these points and displayed as a line map. 0 was at lowest level of satisfaction and 4 at highest on the vertical scale (y axis) and educational and career related events, birth (left) to 2018 (right), on the horizontal scale (x axis).

By gridding the original document, the relative placement of the drawn line was transferred to an excel spreadsheet.

	Infants		Juniors			High School		Post 16	
Katie	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.7	2.2	
Jess	2.9	3	3	3.5	1.5	1.2	0.7	0.2	
Josie	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.7	1.5	1.5	2.7	1.8	
Anna	2.2	2.2	2.2	1.9	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.1	
Amanda	2.1	2.2	2.3	1.4	0.8	0.6	1.5	1.6	
Jasmine	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.7	0.4	0.3	1.8	2	

Table 3 Example from plotting drawn lines to excel with section circled below

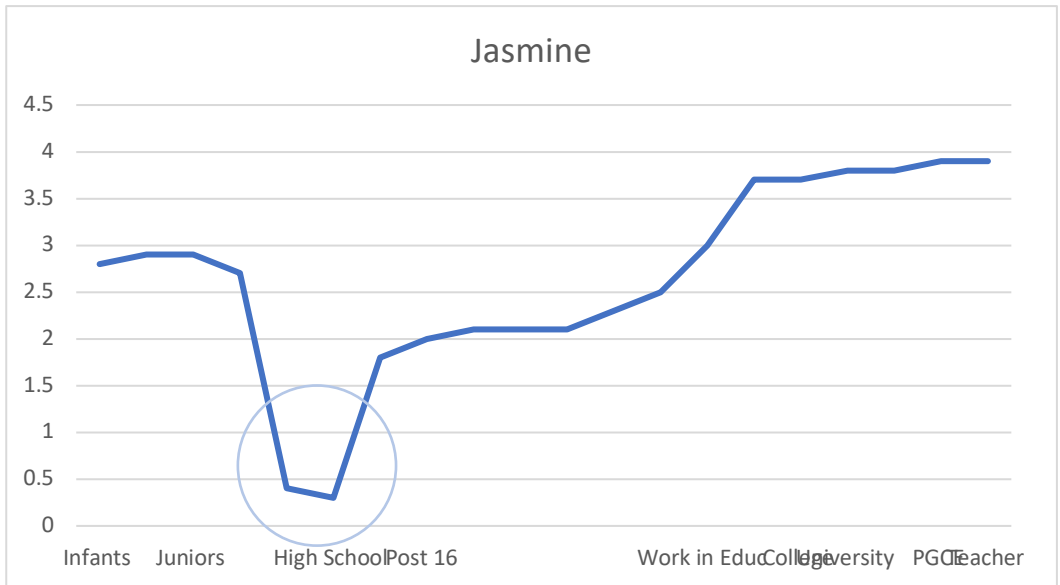
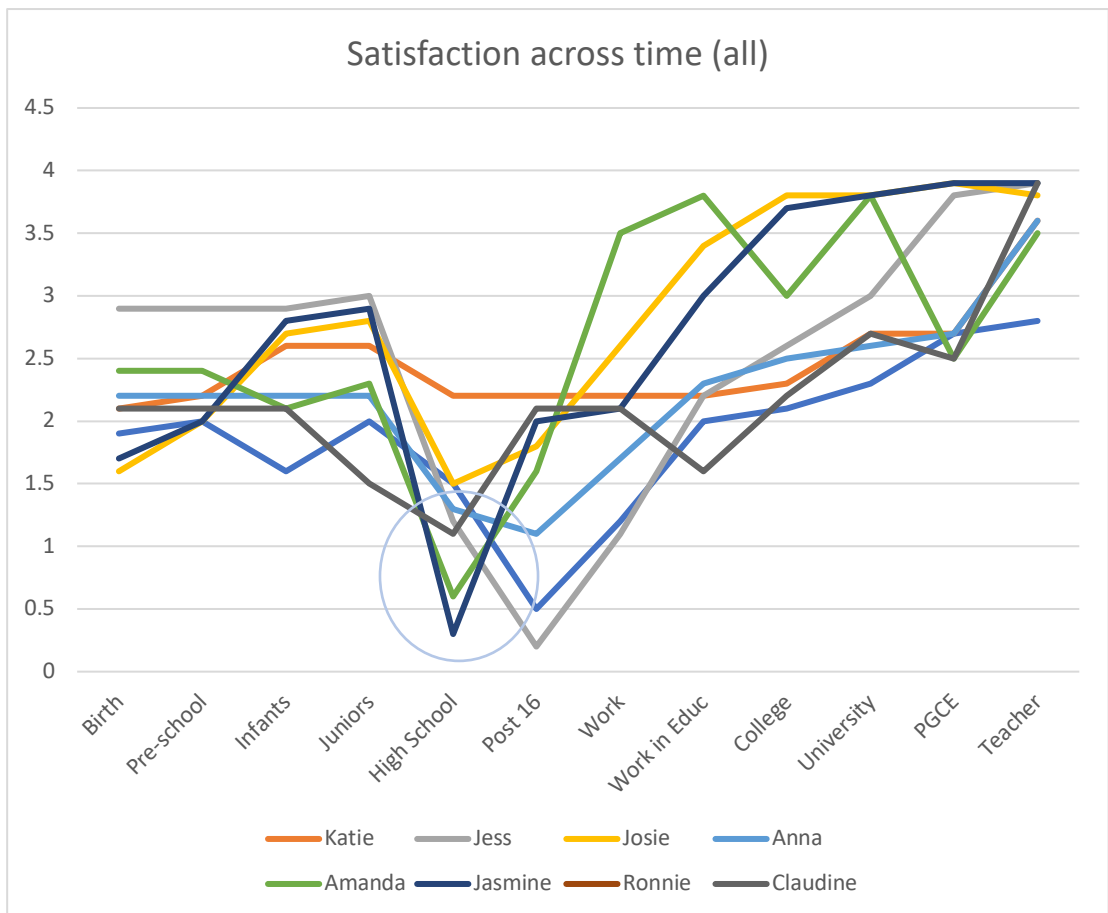


Figure 2 Jasmine's satisfaction line

Figure 3 Collated satisfaction lines



Next, an educational policy timeline was collated, under which the key dates of the participants were paralleled.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
					Tony Blair										Gordon Brown			David Cameron					David Cameron	Theresa May
		Gillian Shephard			David Blunkett				Estelle Morris	Charles Clarke		Ruth Kelly		Alan Johnson	Ed Balls/John Denham			Michael Gove				Nicky Morgan		Justine Greening
ogy College					1997 Kennedy Report	Learning Works: Widening participation in Further Education																		
ation and Training for the 21st Century - propo					1997 Dearing Report	Higher Education in the learning society- 3rd review - recommended wider participation in HE																		
er Education: A New Framework					1997 DfEE Circular	Teaching: High status, high standards - ITT requirements.																		
					1997 White paper	Excellence in Schools																		
Pay and Conditions Act - but allowed Sec of Stat					1997 Education (Schools) Act	abolished assisted places scheme																		
Men' report: Curriculum Organisation and Class					1997 Literacy Task Force	The implementation of the National Literacy strategy																		
er and Higher Education Act FE no longer under					1997 QAA for HE estab.																			
ition (Schools) Act - created Ofsted					1997 Green paper	Excellence for all children: Meeting SEN - 5 year plan																		
e DFE					1998 Education (Student Loans) Act	- Student loans to private sector																		
paper Choice and Diversity: A new framework for schools -					1998 CESC Report	Dissaffected Children report with recommendations 14-19 yr olds																		
1993 Spiritual and Moral Development - discussion paper					1998 National Childcare Strategy																			
1993 Education Act - schools could become grant-maintain					1998 Education Action Zones	- Blunkett																		
1993 Learning to succeed: a radical look at education toda					1998 Teaching and HE Act	- estab General Teaching Council GTC, abolished maintenance grants, students contribute to																		
1994 DfE Circular Religious Education and Coll					1998 School Standards and Framework Act	- enc selection by specialisation, school names changed.																		
1994 Warwick Evaluation Implementation of E					1998 National Literacy Hour	intro in Primary																		
1994 Dearing Review National Curriculum and					1998 Crick Report	Education for citizenship and teaching of democracy in schools																		
1994 DfE Circular Education Act 1993 Sex Educ					1998 Green Paper	- Teachers: meeting the challenge of change																		
1994 Education Act - Teacher Training Authority establishe					1999 Education (School premises) Regulations																			
1994 Labour Party 'Opening doors to a learning society' by					1999 Education (School Premises) Regulations																			
1994 Russell Group of universities formed					1999 Moser Report	Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start (Blunkett)																		

Figure 4 Example of a section of the educational policy timeline

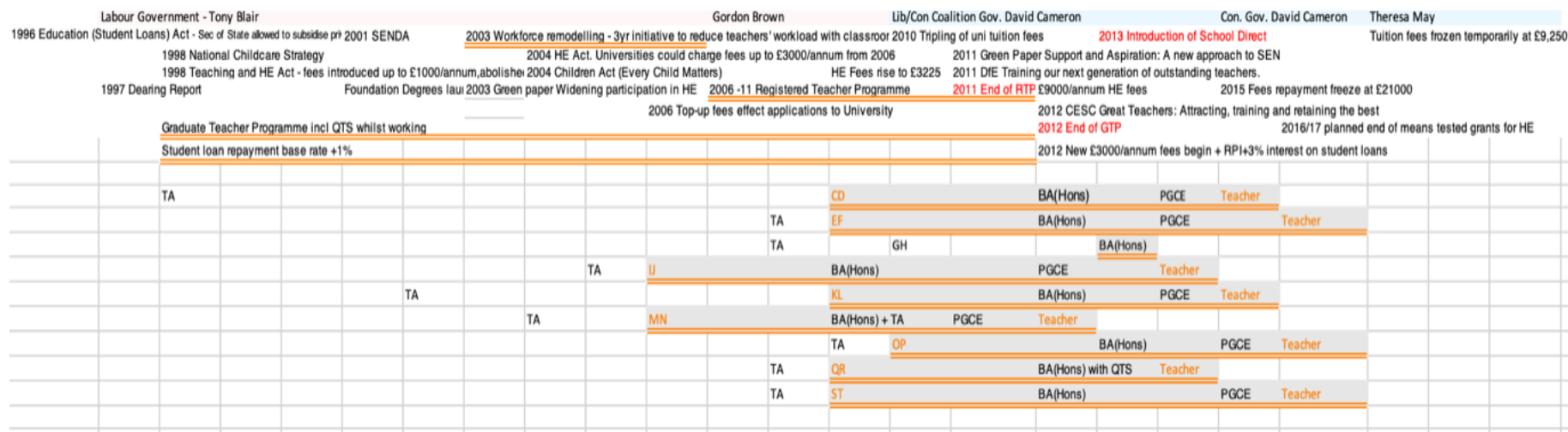


Figure 5 Career timelines of participants paralleled with only most relevant educational policy (1998 - 2018).

## Transcription of interviews

### Agreed Transcription Conventions

- (?) This sign in front of a name indicates that a guess has been made as to the identity of the speaker.
- ... Indicates pause.
- = This sign indicates 'latching' which is two utterances that follow one another without any perceptible pause where the second utterance develops a different idea.
- // This sign indicates the point where overlap by the next speaker begins.
- ( ? ? ? ) Indicates uncertain or unclear talk of approximately the length of the blank spaces between parentheses.

The interviews, professionally transcribed (example Appendix 5), were in an accurate, pre-agreed format to be able to add my notes and make only a few minor adjustments to grammar for clarity of meaning. This was done by following the transcription whilst listening to the audio recordings. The resulting documents were uploaded to an NVivo programme.

Figure 6 Agreed transcription conventions

## **Chapter 5 Approach to data analysis**

### **Introduction**

This chapter draws purposefully on Braun and Clarke's (2006) guide to thematic analysis, which shows compatibility with the overall epistemology of the research, and with my research questions. I explain the process of data immersion, coding the data initially manually, and then using NVivo to organise the data to meaningful groupings (themes), using graphic representations of data, reviewing, refining and defining themes, reaching a point of saturation in data and finding relationships between themes. Finally, I discuss how the resulting data relates to the research questions.

### **Compatibility of thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is known for its flexibility as a method and has the potential to offer a thick description of a data set, along with the ability to generate unanticipated insights of both the social and psychological in the context of a period of time (Braun and Clarke, 2006). However, qualitative data analysis generally also bears the challenge of addressing verisimilitude. In order to minimise this concern, I followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) suggestion of an organised and structured analysis based on an established framework that works through data reduction techniques and displays of data (often with matrices or diagrams) to detail, describe and explain the data. These descriptions are not merely narratives but identify emerging connecting and disparate features in and across the data. The resulting conclusions and verifications, they suggest, are strengthened by a declaration of the inconsistencies, contradictions or outliers, that are structured into the method of analysis. They argue that rigour in the analysis adds to the overall reliability. Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework has potential to code concepts and variables and show connections to describe and explain the data that Miles and Huberman proposed as necessary. I, therefore, take time to further explain this framework in relation to the compatibility with my research as a whole.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that thematic analysis has the potential to range from an essentialist or realist perspective connecting language and its meaning

'unidirectionally' (p.85) all the way to a constructionist thematic analysis that theorises 'sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts' (p.85). The latter perspective, compatible with my overall aim, considers experiences and their meanings as also affected by social and political reproduction, rather than *only* inherent within individual psychologies. This reaffirmed my approach, which considered the individual responses as stories with broader socially and politically constructed influences. Likewise, the choice of life course study enabled insights that link the socio-political context and changes in individual responses (Elder and Giele, 2009) that may alter over time. Finally, Careership theory (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Hodkinson, 2008) with its emphasis on the role of structure, agency and temporality is also attuned to this approach to data analysis. The research is set in a particular historical context and against fast moving policy directives between 2000 to 2018 in England. During this period, I considered the horizons for action (Hodkinson, 2008) and pathways that were experienced by these TAs in terms of socio-political effects and individual nuances, in carving a second chance professional career in education.

### **Rationale for analytical process**

Braun and Clarke (2006) identified that the patterns that arise through the coding process and the thematic analysis of the data are influenced by the research approach in four respects, i) the epistemological, which could range from realist to constructionist approaches, ii) through a rich description of the full data set through to an individual aspect thereof, iii) in the range between inductive and deductive analyses, and iv) from the identification of semantic themes to discovering emergent latent themes. This formed a useful flexible framework to consider when I selected for the coding, categorising and analysis in this study. Content analysis was rejected for analysing the interviews, as an a priori selection of itemised words or phrases did not have the potential to fully uncover the inferences and subtleties that are possible with thematic analysis. Likewise, narrative analysis was rejected due to its better suitability to individual or biographical accounts. This research is not just about eight individual stories, but stories that collectively illuminate the socio-political context in which they all operated before and during these years, hence the additional use of visual mapping and representation. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.97) argue that 'a



rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions', and so the following section articulates the decision-making that determined how this purpose and *method* of coding and analysis of the collected data was attuned with my overall research approach.

The epistemology of this study has been established as within the life course paradigm, with critically reflexive features. The reflexive considerations enriched socio-political data that was being considered and acknowledged the TAs' horizons for action as identified in Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). A narrative analysis was rejected early on in order to focus on the usefulness of findings in a broader socio-political context, rather than as solely auto/biographical accounts. Instead, the told stories illuminated factors that could influence the career progression of TAs during this period of time. This model of thematic analysis enabled the ability to notice emerging data. Whilst embracing new themes deriving from the data, I also had an a priori attachment to the Careership framework (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), and further focused my field using a sociological theory of time in order to explore the data collected. This meant that whilst some aspects of grounded theory would not be inappropriate to data that emerged, and some useful, it was not the primary method used to discover and examine data. The use of this strong, flexible framework served to anchor and stabilise the efficacy of the claims made in this context (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

This method of analysis does not serve well as merely a quantifiable measure, nor was it a priority in this study to capture solely the number of instances a theme or topic was raised. The quality of the responses to the research questions were central to the exploration, which is a strength of inductive thematic analysis.

Each theme was important to the research question and was exposed through patterned responses from across the data set (all data collected) *and* that which was unveiled within a data item (a single part of the data collected). Braun and Clarke (2006) confirm that key themes are not necessarily where there are most occurrences across the data set, but they are important in uncovering explanations to describe the phenomena. This is illustrated in the dialogue and in Tables 5 and 6 and Figure 7 below. Thematic analysis is also flexible in the collection and coding of different types of qualitative data (in this case, from the interviews and timelines). Here, an inductive method coded the data with what occurred in the interview or through the graphic representations, using NVivo software, rather than using a pre-

existing coding frame stemming from the questions. Both are data driven, but an inductive approach enabled coherence with an epistemology that welcomes evolving explanations where themes become the categories analysed.

I have now argued that semantic analysis is also within the scope of thematic analysis though, at purest, is driven by an explicit search that is directly contained by for instance the frequency of pre-existing coded words. In this research, the prevalence of themes had to be acknowledged as significant, but as Braun and Clarke (p. 83) noted, the *quantity* exposed in semantic analysis does not necessarily define the key issues associated with this researcher’s theoretical interest, as illustrated in the next section.

## Process of Analysis

### *Familiarisation of data*

As interviewer, I made some notes on my observations of emerging themes as I listened repeatedly to the initial interview recordings, prior to the second part of the first stage interviews.

In this initial process, broad stroke themes were noted manually in order to get a feel for the whole and I noted the themes that were directed from, and emerged as, responses to the questions. There is some parallel with Charmaz’ (2006) use of coding, as the main analytic tool and the importance of the role of the researcher in immersing oneself in and actively interpreting data in order to understand what is happening within both a broad and individual social context.

Based on the first stage of the process, listening to and studying the transcriptions of the interviews, the following codes were noted as being prevalent themes.

Broad theme	Related coding
Behaviours at school	Teacher effect, rules, influences, formal/relaxed environment
Home influence	Expectations, 1 <sup>st</sup> in family, social habits
Inspiration	Family, travel, caring others
Values/ethos	Quality of life, approach to work
Academic stretch	Job requirements, time of life, excitement of learning
Opportunity	Types of experience that opened doors
Work experience	Knowledge through practice
Encouragement, support	Peers, awards, relationships, head teacher

Confidence	Occurred over time
Balancing risk and security	Financial, family
Time	Experience and qualifications over time, disciplined planning
Peers	Teamwork, influence of

Table 4 Broad themes and coding

At this stage, it was clear that the breadth of data collected was immense and becoming complex to organise manually. Turning to the computerised programme NVivo, enabled capacity to log codes that could be organised in different ways to develop compatible codes to themes. After the first interviews, I transferred the data already manually coded to NVivo and continued to use it through the second interview and analysing the visual representations of data. At this stage, I began to use the NVivo descriptor of ‘node’ in replacement of ‘code’.

*Coding, NVivo and initial analytic interests and thoughts*

The use of NVivo for identifying and recording nodes began after the second interviews. A total of 68 nodes across both sets of interviews were identified at this stage, extracted from paragraph-to-paragraph, from segments of data, or as defined incidents, to capture the main meanings and actions from the statements. NVivo software, enabled the prevalence of themes to be visually displayed (as illustrated in Figure 7).

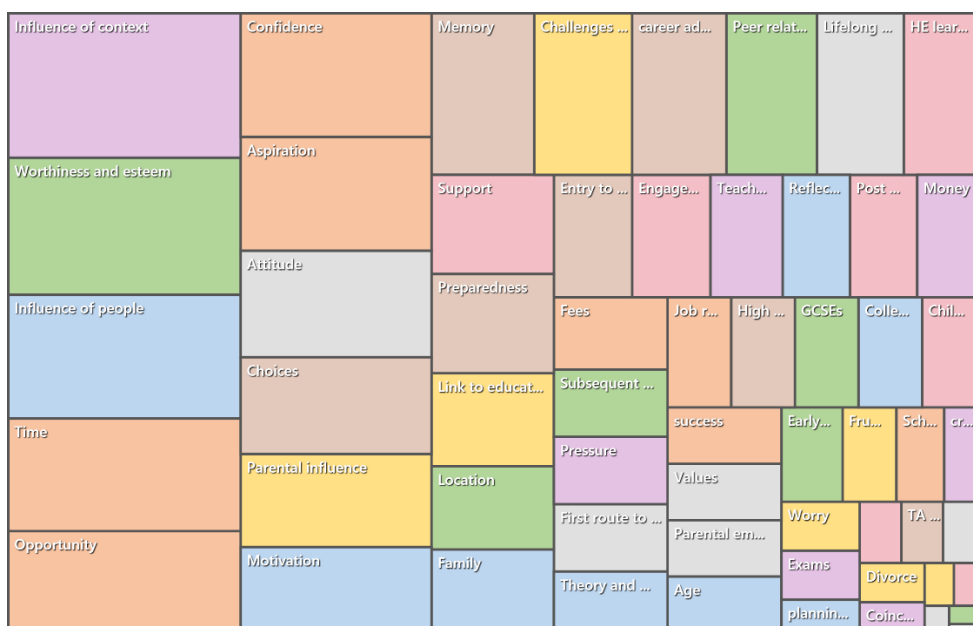


Figure 7 Prevalence of nodes of interview rounds 1& 2 as shown through NVivo.

Many sections of text had overlap in node codes. It was important not to ignore the potential volume and complexity in node identification, as well as the potential significance of single references. The most frequent nodes (*Table 5*) in this initial analysis were in:

- i) the influences of the context in which they occurred
- ii) the time (for example: in the era/ decade/stage in lifelong learning/age or lifespan/maturity etcetera)
- iii) interviewees feelings of worthiness, efficacy or esteem
- iv) the influence of significant other people on their choices, behaviour or thinking.

Node name	References
Influence of context	198
Time	185
Worthiness and esteem	152
Influence of people	144

*Table 5 Nodes with the highest frequency of reference*

Compared to this, at the other end of the scale (*Table 6*), were lower rates of incident, but just as significant on those participant's lives. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) insight, I could confirm that key themes are not only where there are most occurrences across the data set, they are also important in uncovering explanations to describe the phenomena.

Node name	References
Health	4
Comradery	4
Travel to work	2

*Table 6 Nodes with the lowest frequency of reference*

Each theme was important to the research question and was exposed through patterned responses from across the data set (all data collected).

## Analysis using participant-led graphic representation

### *Graphic representation of satisfaction*

To intensify the rigour of analysis, and to enhance recognition of change over time in Careership theory, I drew upon a graphic representation data collection tool (Riuz-Primo et al, 2001) that provided a self-assessed satisfaction rating across time, completed by the participants, which I later collated (Figure 8) and transposed to a political timeline. This enabled exploration of potential influences of educational policy, at any given time in the participants' educational lives. The resulting analytical descriptions that I present below are not merely narratives, but intended to identify emerging, connecting and disparate features in and across the data.

Figure 8 illustrates the way that the participants did not follow similar patterns of satisfaction during the time they were out of educational contexts, but all show current high levels of satisfaction in their professional lives.

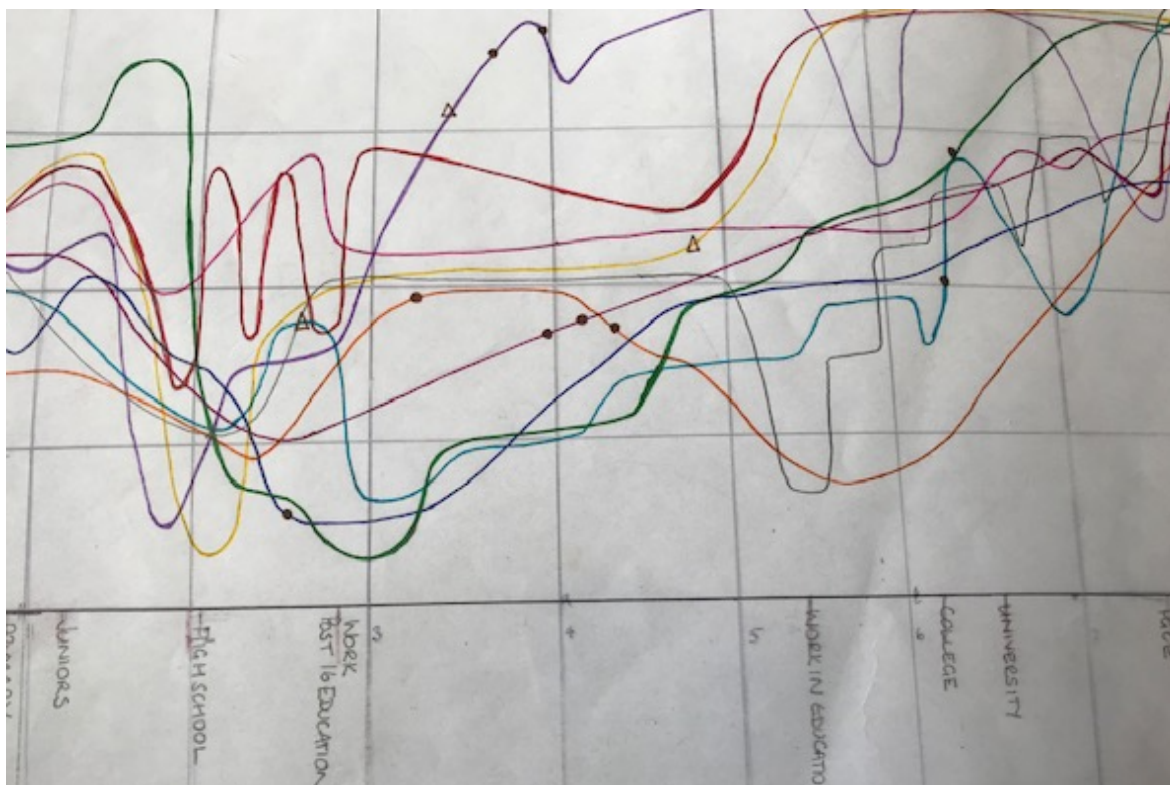


Figure 8 Collated satisfaction lines across life courses.

The participants' career pathways were set in a particular historical context from 2000 to 2018 in England, so I considered the horizons for action (Hodkinson, 2008) and pathways that were experienced by these participants in terms of socio-political effects and in individual nuances, in carving a second chance professional career in education. This resulted from transposing the interview data to a timeline (Appendix 6) that tracked the participants' life courses, illuminating the connections between their experiences and the educational policy landscape.

As participants reflected on their horizons for action, they saw that these altered over time; both their contexts and policy changed over time. This complemented Hodkinson's concern, when he discussed how individuals' decisions cannot be isolated events; they have a past, present and future. That is, the current view alters over time and is affected by what has come before and after. The horizons seen by the individuals emanated from both external (structural) and internal (dispositional) influences and were not necessarily orderly (Hodkinson, 2008). For instance, the timeline diagrams illustrate that in the post school years there was a period of time where participants had very differing experiences to each other. In terms of satisfaction, these were further explained in their narratives as being dependent on a range of social, economic and dispositional factors.

The ability to collect latent themes from the interview data to identify '*underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations ... and ideologies', qualified as interpretive (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The graphic representations offered insight to affective-based responses and were demonstrated through the illustrative satisfaction lines drawn by the participants on their own life course timeline.

Alongside, the mapping of the participants' key life course data drawn from their satisfaction lines, timelines and from their interviews onto a political timeline of educational policy, allowed effects of socio-political change to be seen as either enabling or hindering the course of the participants' career paths. These three perspectives could then be collectively visible in the themed areas.

#### *Using researcher-led visual representations*

Harper (1998) offers a visual model that is useful, covering the macro-micro-meso, showing the big picture (in this study exemplified and demonstrated through the literature review and the educational policy timelines), a close-up perspective (in the

interviews and thematic analysis thereof) and also recognising a meso area, that is often missing, that helps to answer complicated questions about society. This meso area (exemplified here through the drawn timelines, satisfaction scaling and the visual displays of data) offers additional alternative connections to be viewed that give insight to relationships that are not noticed through the textual references alone. It is through this visual lens that change over time could be identified for analysis. For instance, a common thread in the dialogues of the participants is their perceived 'failure' in their high school years to demonstrate their intelligence through the examination system. This can be easily noticed and tracked through the dialogue; less easy to identify are the patterns between leaving school and returning to HE because of their varying natures. However, the collective graphic representations show the antonym of a career 'trajectory' in all cases. That is, evidence of the individual and collective highs and lows of a complex and indirect route to their goals. As Prosser and Loxley (2008, p.4) exemplified:

'Simply put visual methods can: provide an alternative to the hegemony of a word-and-number based academy; slow down observation and encourage deeper and more effective reflection on all things visual and visualisable; and with it enhance our understanding of sensory embodiment and communication, and hence reflect more fully the diversity of human experiences'.

Challenges to be aware of come in the potential danger of misrepresentation and subjective interpretations when transferring data from or to a visual model, though this could also be said of other data collection and analysis methods or in poorly displayed data, or just too much 'chartjunk' (Tufte, 2001, p.107), yet can arguably give powerful 'access to the subtle and the difficult – that is, the revelation of the complexity' (Tufte, 2001, p.191).

As example, Amanda's experiences can be shown as unproblematic and as a 'trajectory' (Figure 9), or as more complex, subtle or problematic when detailed as in diagram (Figure 10). Both are based on the same correct data, yet (Figure 9) suggests a much more simplified story.

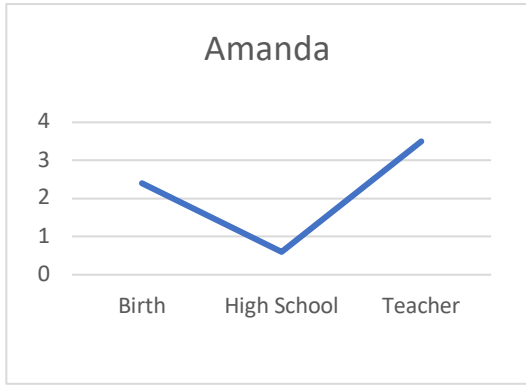


Figure 9 Simplified trajectory

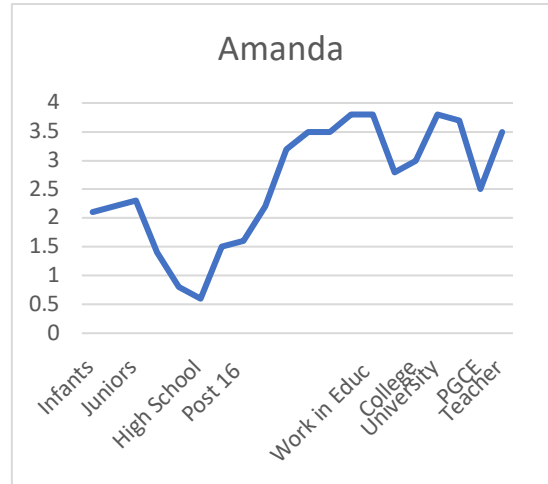


Figure 10 Nuanced timeline



## Using Careership theory as a theoretical framework in analysis

Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) was also discussed in Chapter 3 but in analysis it gives a lens that exposes how decisions made by individuals are enabled and restricted by relational forces in a field, thereby effecting an individual's 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson, 2008). The external environment and the embodied positions and dispositions can be influenced in many ways. The possible horizons for action at any given time are highly influenced by the 'field' (Bourdieu, 1993). This Bourdieuan influence was explained in Chapter 3 and was integrated into the analysis. The paralleling of diagrammatic representations of affective and structural elements from the narratives and policy change added to the ability to notice change over time, giving breadth to data for analysis when using Careership theory.

In review, and as a reminder of the analytical tools at hand, Careership theory allowed the researcher to consider:

- i. Positioning in broad structural fields (recorded in timelines and interview)
- ii. Embodied influence of the individual to their choices (from ideogram/graphic representation and interview)
- iii. Acknowledging that not all decisions are planned or determined by identifying 'horizons for action'

Part iii) was identified by the authors as the most under-theorised part of the theory and when it was re-considered by Hodkinson (2008, p.35) it was thought to be less about what was originally identified as 'turning points', but more about 'horizons for action' that are influenced by the external environment *and* embodied positions and dispositions. The significance of this re-focus is important to this study to understand the complex routes and variety of decision-making that were made across a specific period of time. It enabled, and subsequently reinforced, the conceptual understanding and aim of my research, which sought to understand the effects of a combination of policy, agency and passing of time on these participants. The effects of political influence in the UK, related to entry to HE have been considered through race, class and gender (Reay et al, 2001). And, as Reay and Ball (1997) suggested some time ago, social advantage for all through education is tempered by social class differences in responses to so called 'choices' that are strongly influenced by parents' own educational experiences and memories and serve to maintain

inequality. By noting 'horizons for action', it allowed the effects of changing political influences to be illuminated over the time period of this study and record what emerged as a persistence of inequality in a number of areas.

By grouping the themes, the key categories that emerged (Figure 11) were considered in relation to the three corresponding aspects of Careership (Table 7), each of which is discussed in the findings (Chapter 7).

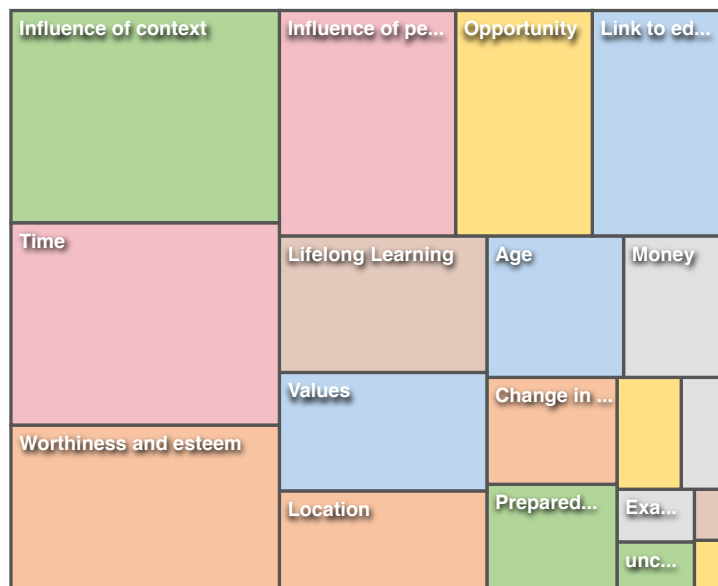


Figure 11 Key themes

Structural	Embodied	Horizons for action
Influence of context: school, college, work, HE	<i>Worthiness and esteem:</i> being valued, confidence, aspiration, attitude, motivation, tenacity, commitment, personal attributes	Influence of people and context: Support & advice, gatekeeping, hierarchies
Geographical location	<i>Influence of people:</i> parental influence, support of others, family, comradeship, divorce, teachers, maternity	Time Era, epoch, daily, in life course

Qualifications and status	Values: moral and ideational	Opportunity, choices
Economic status: funding, income	Crises, pressure Avoiding failure	Preparedness & uncertainty
Policy	Views of success/satisfaction, disposition, ambition	Health
	Protected characteristics: age, gender...	Geographical mobility
	Reflective practice	Knowledge
		Change
		Lifelong learning

Table 7 Tabulated key categories

In review of this chapter, as Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledged, the phases that they identified for thematic analysis are not unique to this form of analysis, yet their phased guide was useful for me to structure the process for clarity and for potential reproduction of the research in other contexts. My research process followed their guidelines (not rules) from *familiarisation, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes to the production of an analysis report*. The organisation and structure of the analytical process aimed to reflect Miles and Huberman's (1994) argument for rigour in the analysis, to add to the research reliability. Their commendation to use visual displays, for example, matrices and diagrams suits the attempt to illustrate and record complex contexts and unveil otherwise latent meaning. They are integral to the methods I selected for data collection and analysis.

## Chapter 6 Findings and discussion

### Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the data set of the participants' narratives in relation to the central research questions:

1. How do TAs negotiate a career route to teacher status?
2. What factors enable or restrict TAs' agency through their career path?

To this end, I parallel the participants' narratives aside the structural context in which they were experienced. Their individual accounts were pervaded by a continual reference to balancing opportunities and risks, which collectively played into a formation of the categories: 'enablers' and 'restrictors' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). I identified these categories from the participants' narratives (Table 8) and then analyse the themes throughout the chapter.

Enablers	Restrictors
Influence from significant friends or family with HE experiences	Limitations of teachers/teaching and lack of support at high school
Parental attitudes to education	Policy change and adaptation
In-service routes for teaching qualifications	Peer/family lack of or inability to support
Peer support	Lack of self-confidence/belief
Self-confidence/belief	Non-normative routes
Fitting in, normative paths	'Ceilings' in career development
Family and friends' support	Unpaid teacher training routes

*Table 8 Enablers and restrictors in participants' career progressions.*

The effect on individual participants' personal and familial lives highlighted a tense 'cost-benefit' relationship, between longer-term career opportunities and prospects and that of 'managing it' (Jess), 'finding that balance' (Jasmine), being constantly 'on the brink' (Josie) or exasperation in thinking that there must be 'easier ways [to make a living]' (Josie's son). A continual offsetting of significant personal monetary outlay and corresponding investment in time was seen through the data to be necessary for the TAs to even attempt to achieve their career aims.

### **Analysis of themes, under three aspects of Careership theory.**

The value of Careership theory as a framework to understand the emerging data has already been examined in Chapter 5 and as identified is underpinned by a Bourdieuan analytical perspective that helps to distinguish dynamics in the field and changing habitus over time. Evidence was drawn from the narrative data, illustrative graphics and timeline data to unveil emergent themes, serving to elucidate political influences and reflect social (re-)positioning of individuals (their horizons for action) across time.

The rest of this chapter is structured in three sections using the lens of 'Careership' theory in analysis, that is, in relation to:

- 1) the broad structural fields in which the research occurs
- 2) embodied influences that affect individuals and
- 3) the participants' 'horizons for action' over time.

The first part of this chapter has a main focus on the participants' positioning in the political field across time and interrogates how policy change directly impacted on their personal lives and careers. Further sub-sections in this chapter follow an analysis of the participants' experiences in their social fields and their corresponding sense of satisfaction, efficacy and self-value at different times. Attitudes towards education at different stages in their life course are discussed with themes emerging that chassé between seeing school as a primarily social venue, to positive connections made with familial attitudes to education and work. The pro-active efforts that the participants displayed stemmed from a habitus drawn from familial influences and which was replicated in education and careers in later life. The section discussing 'horizons for action' navigates through their previous experiences to analyse themes of readiness and confidence, positioning in a field, hitting a ceiling and playing the game.

To close the chapter, a discussion identifies risk and opportunity as a tension emerging from the data. This is discussed through inspection of the participants' experiences in relation to time and timing, mitigating the structural, as women negotiating dynamic fields and in acquiring symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). To note: there is much overlap between these sections as the effects are not independently existent, rather they interpolate and interweave as a rich tapestry.

## **1) Positioning in broad structural fields**

### **The influence of policy**

As school leavers between 1985 and 2005, policy affected the participants differently. Their routes to employment varied. The start of their first TA jobs ranged between 1998 and 2009, with six out of eight most likely acquiring these posts as a result of 'workforce re-modelling' (DfES, 2002; 2003a). Strikingly, not one of the participants had official career advice for this direction. Instead, the posts were encountered at an opportune juncture in their (self-declared) stunted careers and/or where the work fit better with their parenting and family responsibilities. The FDs were an option to get practical experience in an educational context whilst balancing family life and it is interesting that these participants, at a stage of a stall in their early careers, each believed in the power of education and found inspiration for change in that context.

Katie was employed as a TA with seven other TAs from an agency in 2008; Jess found a free Work Access course from a newsletter from school and followed it up; Josie did a CACHE programme as it was on in the next village, therefore accessible, and then a programme called 'Helping in Schools'; Amanda did a Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education whilst at school, where she got a job in insurance and later an NVQ level 3 and diploma in childcare in education. Anna and Jasmine had A-level qualifications. Ronnie and Claudine continued their education on level 3 courses in Nursery Nursing and Childcare. There were a variety of routes, exemplifying the increasing complexity of pathways that needed to be found and then negotiated by young people. Whiting et al, (2018) have recently charted a myriad of fragmented routes that were available to reach qualified teacher status in England in 2015-16. The complexity they outlined was largely for mainstream routes to teaching that, for the participants in my study, were not accessible. The findings of my study add to this body of knowledge by showing additional complex examples of the circuitous routes required for these non-normative career paths.

Contributing effectively to the household income, whilst establishing a career was problematic for all participants. Claudine was on minimum wage because she did not have the stipulated level 3 qualification in childcare (although she had one in social work). Claudine used local authority funding to gain another level 3 qualification, despite it being in nursery age childcare, which she did not want in the long term; this resulted two years later in a wage rise of 5p per hour. However, she rationalised this inequity with being able to start an incremental route to teaching, the only possible route she saw that was open to her. Later, in 2015, her only option was to do a Schools Direct Route 'full-time, non-salaried nightmare, erm, for one year' (Claudine), as by this time she had a mortgage to contribute to and it was a significant investment for her and her family; the long-term investment both emotionally and financially was huge. Anna did the new SCITT in 2013 saying, 'so twelve month's unpaid work, unpaid, but loved every minute of it.' She qualifies her position by explaining that her ability to do this was due to her husband's income and having completed their mortgage payments, which they had worked long and hard to achieve. She was relieved that she did not have the debt that current fees determine.

The political agenda to encourage the upskilling of the workforce pervades the education sector. This was also reflected in the informal encouragement, advice and support given to these participants. Once in a teaching assistant/support role, there was significant encouragement from some of the deputy and head teachers to 'upskill'. Josie was told by her deputy head that 'you need to be doing something more than this...I'm going to look into it', leading Josie to the Foundation degree. Further down the line the school sponsored her Graduate Teaching Programme (GTP) training whilst she was working. Anna was involved as a TA with a scheme called Teachers' International Professional Development, where she was encouraged by peers to think about a teaching route. Jasmine's head teacher had encouraged her to consider teaching and supported her development throughout, also offering a Schools Direct place for her. The length of time that the route to teacher status took was varied. Figures 12 and 13 are informative and show the participants' varying timescales to reach teacher status.

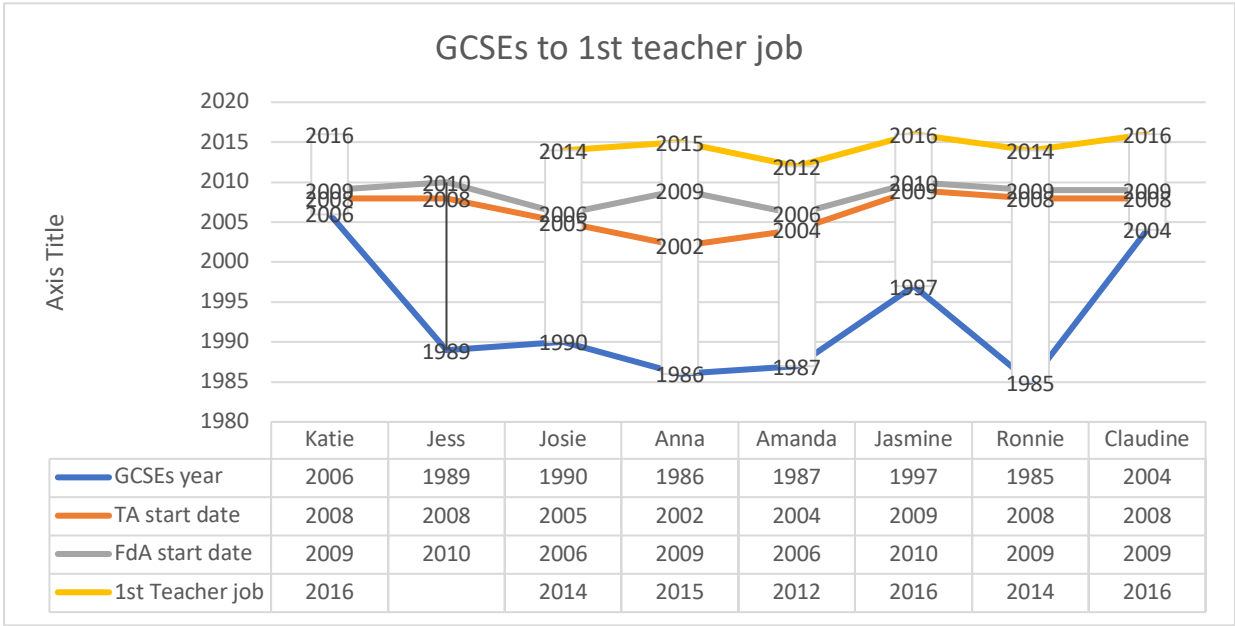


Figure 12 GCSEs to first teaching job.

The earlier date is each participant's GCSE year and the vertical axis shows how long it took to get to their first TA job, starting HE and then at their first qualified teaching job.



2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Gordon Brown				Lib/Con Coalition Gov. David Cameron				Con. Gov. David Cameron Theresa May					
				2010 Tripling of uni tuition fees			2013 Introduction of School Direct			Tuition fees frozen temporarily at £9,250			
				2011 Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to SEN									
				HE Fees rise to £3225		2011 DfE Training our next generation of outstanding teachers.							
2006 -11 Registered Teacher Programme				2011 End of f			£9000/annum HE fees		2015 Fees repayment freeze at £21000				
2006 Top-up fees effect applications to University						2012 CESC Great Teachers: Attracting, training and retaining the best							
						2012 End of GTP			2016/17 planned end of means tested grants for HE				
						2012 New £3000/annum fees begin + RPI+3% interest on student loans							
		TA	Katie		BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher				
		TA	Jess		BA(Hons)				Lecturer				
Josie				BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher					
				Anna		BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher			
Amanda				BA(Hons) + TA		PGCE		Teacher					
		TA	Jasmine		BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher				
		TA	Ronnie		BA(Hons) with QTS		Teacher						
		TA	Claudine		BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher				

Figure 13 Participants' years in HE from starting the FD to their first teacher job.

Once on route to become a teacher, there were structural changes to teacher training qualifications to adapt to and navigate. For several of the participants there was a promise of an in-service, government initiated Registered Teacher Programme (RTP) after the Foundation degree, which was abruptly withdrawn in 2011. For TAs on FDs, the effect of this secession caused great anxiety at the time. Their route had to be re-negotiated to aim for the GTP, which was also an in-service training route, but now these TAs required an Honours level degree, another two years part-time study adding to cost/time effects. The GTP also ended in 2012 leaving some mid-way through their Bachelor degree. There was, for several months, considerable concern that they had been left stranded before a new progression route was launched in School Direct in 2013. Claudine reflected on her long-term plan: 'it was all very planned out, but I had to work with what I was given ...but the end goal was there.' These participants had to adopt durability as they frequently re-negotiated their career paths to fit with changing policy-based requirements and diminishing options.

The University fees hike in 2010 came after these participants began their HE studies, which meant that as long as they did not take a break in study in the same institution, they could continue to Honours level study on the old fees scheme. Asked if they would have taken a loan to top up their Foundation degree, Amanda said, 'no I wouldn't have done it, I don't think I'd have done it...I think it's ridiculous'. Josie was concerned that families on low incomes, like many in her area, are continually 'on the brink' and do not contemplate further study, so it was not a usual route for her to take. The participants describe their routes as if riding a tide that was only available to them at a given time ('luck'), but also recognising their ongoing fragility with the danger of a wave breaking at any unspecified juncture. There is evidence showing that policy can positively affect behaviours and outcomes yet can simultaneously position individuals as hostages to fortune. The changes in the balance between risk and opportunity can be seen in the development of non-traditional routes through education. These initiatives, created in the New Labour years were thwarted for part-time students with the implementation of the £9000 per annum University fees in 2012, which firmly threatened routes that previously could be pursued over the long-

term. Only Josie and Amanda had finished their undergraduate courses before 2012 and the advent of higher HE tuition fees. The others were able to continue their studies, but only with no break, in order to retain their pre-fee-rise facility. Ronnie accessed a course 60 miles away because it also offered QTS and therefore a shorter time frame to teacher status. She recognises that this was only made possible with her partner's support with the children, work flexibility and that she could be mobile and manage financially for a limited time. For those with no transport or with other responsibilities it would not be an option. It became apparent that these participants had support mechanisms that enabled a traversing of conditions and these are further explicated in the findings below.

### **Risky business and 'choice'**

Choices are only available to those who 'contribute to government economic agendas' in a system that cultivates and enables reward to their version of a 'responsible learner' or by being a 'reflexive agent' (Warren and Webb, 2007, p.5). The ability of the learner to 'invest' is thereby individualized and closes opportunity for those without the social or economic capital on which to trade. These participants experienced volatile education and training markets of the 2000s from which they needed to make decisions around economic, social and structural influences that affected their livelihood. The high cost/high risk of career change has previously been confirmed as 'risky business ...[where] everything becomes an individual responsibility' (Reay, 2003, p.312) and is a gendered experience where dual households continue to be divided when making pragmatic decisions based on social norms about where familial responsibilities fall. This is certainly seen in the narratives of these women. All were co-workers or significant contributors to the family income, those with children then took the main care-giver role too. Shortly after the first iteration of Careership theory, Hodkinson (in Avis et al, 2000) also argued that choice, whilst promoted as attractive, is an illusion because choices are dependent not only on personal attributes, but also on the context. To find how this was experienced in this study, my method moved from a singular focus on participants' identifiable key events or as located in their material contexts and dispositions to a method that interlinked their narrated experiences to the structural energies. These were influenced and experienced differently in different fields and changed across time.

In-service work opportunities whilst studying a Foundation degree were the way forward for these participants. They would not have been able to study full-time and each said that they were attracted by the practical, experiential nature of the courses. During the mid-noughties, the drive to use TAs in the classroom gave rise to a funded route to classroom experience. Ronnie was set on with five others at her school, Katie with six. All began by volunteering hours before their paid work. Jess did a free course for volunteers when her children were at school, Josie did a 'Helping in Schools' course whilst volunteering. Anna was a childminder and volunteered at school. Head teachers were encouraged to develop staff. All participants were able to navigate HE before the fees hike of 2012, or at least started before this change. FDs were successful at upskilling staff and providing individual benefits, but entirely limited in pay scales and career progression (Woolhouse and Dunne, 2009). Woolhouse and Dunne argued that the FDs provided highly skilled practitioners who could ably support classes, but they were not recognised with commensurate pay and conditions. These participants recognised this and invested personal, familial and monetary resources to bank higher qualifications to reach their goal. The only route available to Anna was to give up work for a year to complete her unpaid teacher training, SCITT. The individual (and collective) narratives, alongside educational policy change charts, bring the context in line with their life courses in a way that illuminates the connection. Their recognition of their positioning in this field was understood and related through a number of comments made.

Jess recognised the constraints and effects of policy on the lives of teachers:

'I mean I worked so hard to get my degree but the government just don't think about the wider picture and how it affects people with all these decisions that they make and so I don't know if that is what I want to do. I know that whatever I do will have a bigger responsibility and I do want that but I just think that at the minute the stress is too much in primary schools and I know that is across all primaries because I've got lots of friends that work in different schools and they are all feeling the same and lots of them are saying that if they were going into teaching now they probably wouldn't bother. I know three people that have left teaching because of the pressure that they are under. I just think it is so sad because we are going to end up in a mess in this country in education.'

Bringing home the tensions of teaching as a profession, Josie cited her son '...maybe sometimes he (her son) did see me sort of with my head in my hands and he's thought "do you know what, there's got to be easier ways".'

## **Interrogating change**

The analytical processes in my study, offer a method by which this constant flux can be interrogated. Raggl and Troman's (2007) approach identified particular events as 'turning points', just as Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) had originally proposed, but this is less useful for describing the effects of ever-changing policy. Stability in a job for life is no longer an expectation. Career changes have to be 'constantly and continuously remade and reaffirmed' as 'a continuous reflexive project' (Raggl and Troman, 2008, p. 581) as this study's evidence confirms, and which is different to the career continuity experienced in their parents' generation. The realisation of both generations that previously anticipated norms are now in continual flux, appears to be evident in the narratives and it may be that this had bearing on the ability of these participants to redirect their careers; this is not to say they had free choice in this pursuit. Bathmaker (2020) affirmed students' awareness of social class difference in HE was particularly pronounced in the Redbrick University of her study, whilst my study highlighted how change in habitus eventually occurred and strengthened across a (long) period of time through inculcation in a field. Both, however, show inequalities persisting, despite policy ostensibly aiming to improve life chances. My focus on 'horizons for action' over time enabled a longitudinal insight that became a key factor in my findings and enabled recommendations related to addressing inequalities to be proffered.

## **2) Embodied influence of the individual to their choices**

### **In the social field**

All participants showed dedication and tenacity in their pursuit of wider horizons intellectually and financially. They understood that a better life did not necessarily mean high income, but they and their families perceived educational work to be reliable, respected work with more earning power than they currently had. This was a view that each participant acknowledged, reflecting their parents' positioning on the value of education, and why they took the risk to 'do more' (Jess & Josie) and head in that direction.

Part time and term-time-only work appeared to be a better fit with their family responsibilities despite its low pay and so they were willing to take the slow route to

improve their work potential in the longer term. They saw that their potential careers were limited by a range of social and familial factors and rode the wave on opportunities that could expand their career possibilities. They reached a point where they wanted the ability to earn a better wage to contribute to family life and the social world, or build foundations for a future that they thought they would 'miss out on' if they did not build a profile of qualifications that had good trade value. They all had an inherent belief in their ability and desire to 'do more', partly drawing on positive responses given by others as confirmation, and they showed tenacity in negotiating non-normative routes that facilitated recognition and acceptance of their potential. This did not mean that they were confident in themselves, on the contrary they were continually apprehensive about their absence of formal accreditations. Jasmine encapsulated her rationale for investing time and being persistent in reaching her goal in this response:

'I'd been working at the same company for a number of years and I was doing really well but I wasn't going anywhere and to move up I would have needed qualifications. I had gone as far as I could and although the money was good but if I walked away from that job, I would have to start from the bottom again. Without experience I wouldn't have been able to move up so, whichever way you look at it, qualifications do hold value. Experience does as well and combined they are very strong but, going back to my first job, I couldn't have moved any further and if I left that job, I would have nothing to show for it. So even after all those years working, I would have walked away empty handed. I actually did walk away empty handed because I had the experience but not the qualifications to go and find another job which would have paid as well. I know I keep coming back to money but that is part of life and I left good money for less but then I knew I was going to work towards something. I think that's what it was.'

The combination of banking qualifications for future earning power, alongside achieving personal satisfaction and meeting affective needs, were the chief drivers for these participants.

Having established their persistence in affective, intellectual and financial ways, in the next section I assess how the participant-directed satisfaction lines gave insights into both general and individual experiences.

## Satisfaction

By gridding then plotting satisfaction levels from low to high, as depicted in the participants' graphic representations, it makes most visually clear the common drop in satisfaction described during the high school experience (Figures 14a&b).

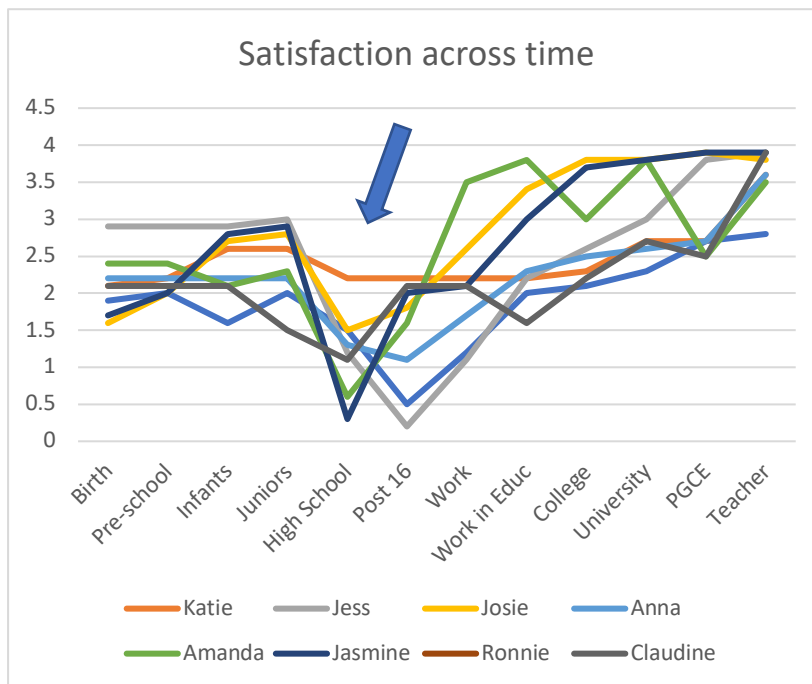
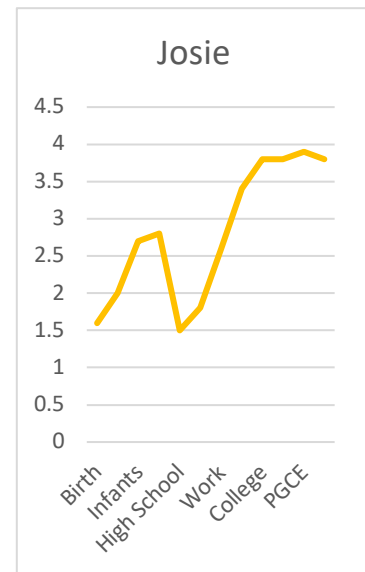


Figure 14a Satisfaction across time (all) and 14b Josie's satisfaction line.



2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Labour Gov				Gordon Brown			Lib/Con Coalition Gov. David Cameron				
2003 Workforce remodelling - 3yr initiative to reduce teachers' workload with classroom assistants										2013 Introduction of School Direct	
	2004 HE Act. Universities could charge fees up to £3000/annum from 2006						2010 Tripling of uni tuition fees		2011 Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to SEN		
	2004 Children Act (Every Child Matters)					HE Fees rise to £3225		2011 DfE Training our next generation of outstanding teachers.			
2003 Green paper Widening participation in HE				2006 -11 Registered Teacher Programme			2011 End of RTP		2012 End of GTP		
			2006 Top-up fees effect applications to University						2012 £9000/annum HE fees		
	Josie	TA	FD			BA(Hons)			PGCE		

Figure 15 Josie TA to PGCE on timeline.

By placing the individual example (Josie Figure 14) on a chronological timeline, it also identified the socio-political context in which the experience was happening (Figure 15).

Here, Josie was seen to be entering HE three years after the Workforce re-modelling initiative (DfES, 2003c) became available by having secured a TA post. On beginning the Foundation Degree, the GTP including QTS and RTP were available,

but these were scrapped with short notice by the Coalition government by 2012. Josie was supported by the school to work full-time on a Schools-centred initial teacher training (SCITT) course. From 2006, and then again in 2012, the new fees effect for University entry could have been a problem, though most Universities honoured the 'old' fees system whilst students continued their studies, as long as there was no break in study. Josie felt that she was fortunate in the way her study enabled her to avoid the higher fees and recalled how a year later it would not have been possible for her as (at that time) there was no part-time funding mechanism and she was a single parent. Her main challenge was with self-confidence, saying she 'still couldn't grasp having got from school leaver to attending University' and at each step she lacked confidence, recalling how she was afraid to commit to anything in case it failed to work out.

This snapshot is replicated across the participants, showing how political change has power and influence that impact beyond systems and has the ability to shape or waylay career directions. It is easy to see how those without the benefits of timely enablers that these participants had, could easily fall by the wayside and not be even noticed in mainstream accounting for teacher training.

The simplified satisfaction data in the figures below represents Amanda's trajectory that appears to represent an upward, steady rise in satisfaction between post-school to teacher status.

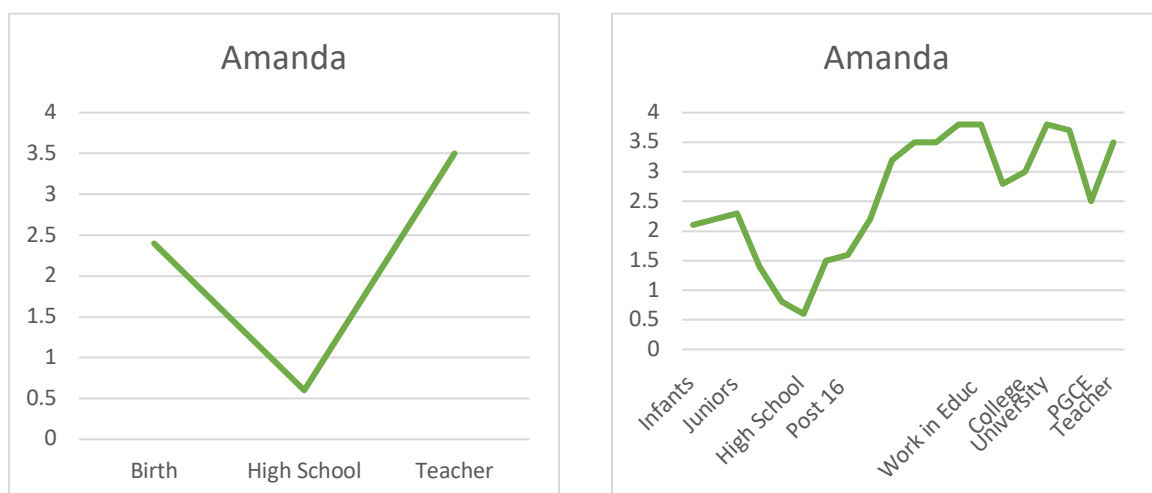


Figure 16a Amanda's trajectory and 16b Amanda's detailed satisfaction line.

Indeed, the ultimate goal of teacher status was reached, and at policy level this may be seen as sufficient, but it belies the tribulations experienced on the way.



This diagram, whilst subjective and representative, when analysed alongside Amanda’s (or any of the other participants) corresponding narrative, gave additional topographic-like contours that show significant change over time. I argue that the representation of these nuances is important to be able to analyse how the experiences follow and differ from the assumed normative career pathways. It is these techniques working alongside a political and lifespan timeline whilst aligned with the narrated stories, that in conclusion I ultimately argue forms a contribution to a method to extend insights and knowledge in research.

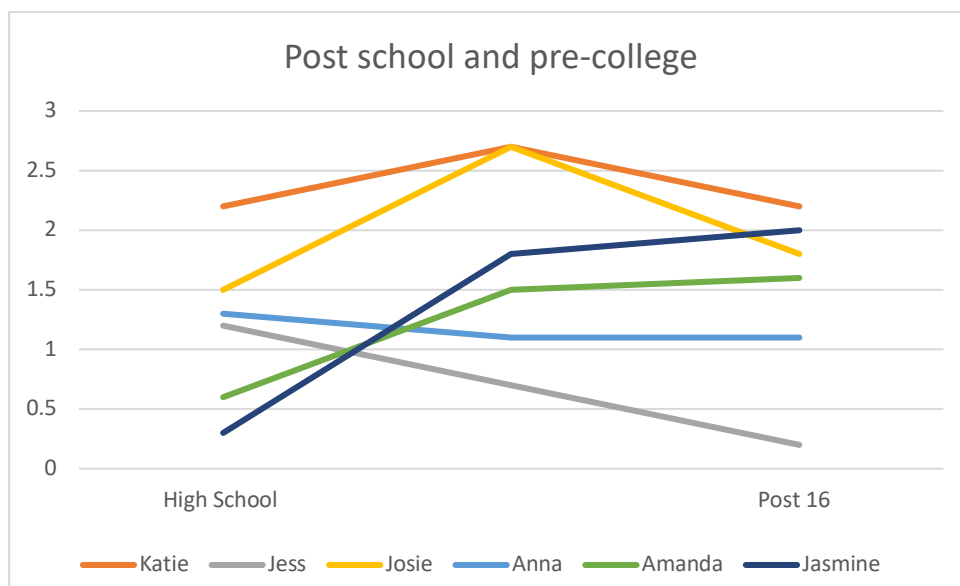


Figure 17 Nuances in narratives directly post-school.

Figure 17 is another example where the mapping technique was able to highlight the nuances in the narratives that give a clearer insight directly post-school. Here, there was less similarity between the participants. Anna’s and Jess’ satisfaction lines continue to decline or flatten out, whilst for the others there is a period of satisfaction that they relate to being able to earn money and enjoy a social life.

The routes between leaving school and the end of the study are complex, most are nowhere close to a direct trajectory and whilst this is a topological type of mapping, the relationships visible between markers allow a particular view of comparisons to be made across their recorded life spans. The information given here acknowledges subtleties that are not visible or noticed with fewer markers across time. This form of mapping manifests itself as a visualisation of complex understandings of what ‘satisfaction’ means between and to each participant.

When talking through their experiences as they drew the lines, one of the shared key themes that supported their success was when they felt valued. The next four subsections discuss the categories related to affective areas: i) being valued, ii) self-sufficiency and confidence, iii) thwarted aspiration and avoiding failure and iv) temperament and values.

### **Affective influences**

#### *i) Being valued*

The participants well-being and confidence were closely linked to the quality of the relationships they experienced in different learning communities. At school this was identified in supportive teachers noticing or taking interest. Jodie's maths teacher had seen her potential and when she was asked to leave before GCSEs to have her baby; he stepped in with another teacher to home tutor her in Maths and English, she quoted him saying, 'there's no way that I'm letting her leave School without any qualifications at all, it's not happening'; the framing of the quote suggests that this was an important declaration to Jodie and confirmed to her that she was important enough for attention. The juxtaposition of a valued human response and the system that rejected her non-normative positioning was significant.

However, Anna remembers a particularly highly controlling teacher, who sucked the joy out of school, blocking windows and demanding answers. Amanda recalled a primary school teacher smacking her a number of times and another teacher telling her parents she would never pass the 11 Plus exam 'no matter how hard she works' and later 'feeling stupid' when told she wouldn't get her GCSEs as she had missed too much. We know from research such as Rockoff's (2004) that the effect that quality teachers have on students is important, but observable characteristics that support achievement are not consistent or measurable across teachers or individuals. The labelling and attitudes did not entirely act as defining prophecies for these participants in the longer term. Jasmine attributes her English teacher's negative remarks about English being her second language as eroding her confidence, but ultimately reflected on how she has been able to turn that around:

'having been in a very similar situation where you've asked for help and you've not got help, I think I was able to be empathetic and I could understand what they might feel. I don't know if that makes sense but

sometimes you feel 'I've been there'. And I enjoyed working with children and helping them and supporting them and I thought that maybe I could do a bit more than this and that's when I thought 'well why don't I.' (Jasmine).

Each participant emphasised the importance of being valued and being believed in. Examples came from other teachers who stepped-in to support. Amanda's form tutor took her under her wing, and she passed her 11-plus, 'she just cared, she cared about me, I enjoyed being with her'. Her aunt and uncle tutored her in English and maths when she'd missed a lot of school; these were the only GCSEs she achieved. All participants said in retrospect they had positive parental or wider family support for education and on reflection, this was significant, but they did not particularly notice this when they were younger. This is reflected in Román et al's (2008) study that explores the relationship between self-esteem, other's expectations, family support and learning approaches on academic achievement in HE. Like this study, the perception of high support from family did encourage active, deep engagement and effort in their study and encouraged intrinsically motivated learning conditions that favour achievement (Entwhistle, 1997).

Later, from their voluntary beginnings of supporting in school through to their TA work, university and teacher training programmes, their confidence has gradually re-established and they purposely place value on attitudes to educational justice issues in their own work. Josie's uncle was a head teacher and told her:

'you'd be a brilliant teacher and I was like don't be so ridiculous. But actually, him saying that to me, who was a head teacher... because I'd had a lot doubt from my teachers in my Primary Education. Whereas none of them believed me in all this and to tell me that ...'.

Perhaps as an additional counterbalance to structures of inequality, Jasmine, Josie and Jess's head teachers all supported their careers, where they could, in advisory, practical and appreciative capacities. This included direction and advice on progression, mentoring and their support through HE. This went beyond being superficially being told they were valued as an individual, but also directed them to routes to achieving goals for themselves and for the school. Anna's head teacher's support has enabled her to get a permanent contract and she identifies herself as so central in school that she has been described as 'the missing jigsaw piece'. However, the changes in education are so rapid that advice offered also shifted from

one year to the next. Head teachers moved schools, academies brought different regimes and their support depended on the direction of the school leader whilst they were in office or until governmental change. Non-normative routes are complex and leave mature part-time students vulnerable to political tides.

*ii) Self-sufficiency and confidence*

It was HE that in large part transformed these TAs into the type of educationalists they wanted to be. Jess reported that it makes her feel stronger when she had knowledge upon which to make decisions and feels she can now 'hold her own ... I've got the confidence to do that now and my boss will support me.'

Jasmine is to the point:

'...it (University education) empowered me because I understood what I was doing and that makes a huge difference. It was no longer actions; it had a purpose. And that's when I started to understand a lot more about education. I'd like to think that I became more ethical in what I did.'

Jasmine, Anna and Ronnie recognised a difference in the process of learning on entering HE, each remarked on 'scaffolded' learning, with effective feedback that built confidence and graduated the growth in autonomy. Ronnie recognises how skills in research, analysis and evidence are critical to decision making and they modestly consider themselves capable of navigating a way through a complex and prescriptive system. Though as Josie reflected on working full-time and studying part-time, she remarked, 'I think it was a constant battle and just battling to get the balance right.'

The goal of teaching is not one that they all have embraced without critique. Jess, who now works in HE, but earlier reflected:

'I would love to teach, but if I've not got any life outside of school. I mean I bring a lot of work home with me now and I think that that could be tenfold. I know that goes with the territory and with the job but there's no switch off at all. I don't think whatever you do is good enough. It's not to do with our management but the government. There is always going to be more, and the goalposts change far too often so whatever you do or put in place they will come along and change'.

Amanda gave an example of an on-going roller-coaster ride in confidence when she 'was sent' on a 'Improving to Teach course', which she has managed to rationalise only after subsequently being recommended for an 'Outstanding Teachers Programme'. In some regard these experiences have transformed to an important value-laden attribute:

'I like an underdog as well, me, I always felt I was the underdog, so I will always support an underdog, always. I won't tell the children. I won't say that to them. But that's how I, a lot of these children are ...the future, you know, the unemployment is horrendous...I felt education let me down, when I was younger, personally' (Amanda).

They all recognised how they've changed with maturity, how they cope with failure and strife instead of rejecting or ejecting themselves, as Jasmine explained of her youth, '...at that time, I don't think I could have dealt with it in any other way than turning away from education.'

*iii) Thwarted aspiration and avoiding failure*

Two of the participants had parents who were first generation immigrants, and whose first languages were not English, and they saw first-hand the challenges that brought:

...they understood the struggle of finding work and being able to participate in society because it is hard because language barriers can create so many other barriers for you as you progress through life and so they were very keen and they were really upset when I refused to go to university to the point where they said 'well what are you going to do with your life?'(Jasmine)

Jasmine's experience replicates those described by Miah (2015) regarding the of aspirations of Muslim families and the importance of education for them, challenging a discourse that assumed academic attainment as unimportant within Muslim communities. Each of Jasmine's parents' three children went to university, Jasmine achieved ten GCSEs and three A-levels, following her younger siblings to HE, but by a different route. Her experience at Grammar School in the sixth form pulled the rug from under her in terms of confidence because of the detrimental way English was assumed to be a second language to her. Withdrawing a university application solved the problem and allowed her to close the door on this unsettling time. This

was not lack of aspiration, rather the effect of unsettling assumptions by others placed on difference. Covington and Omelich (1979) linked protection of self-esteem to situations where underperformance at school was self-attributed to one's own lack of effort, rather than ability and they concluded that this is more likely to happen if self-esteem is low.

Avoidance of failure was common to all the participants. Jasmine said she became non-committal about career options. Josie also associated commitment being tied closely with potential failure and that it would be a representation of herself. That is, others' perceptions of her position did not necessarily relate to how she saw herself. Avoidance activity seemed to be a reaction to this misinterpretation or categorization. The responses from all the participants, that were particularly notable during their high school years, suggests feeling a lack of mutual recognition in relation to school and their valued outcomes. Through the lens of recognition theory (Honneth, 1995), individuals develop a sense of self and self-worth by recognising, and being recognised, by others; where there are conditions for 'misrecognition', it can give rise to resistance. The participants spoke of their scaled responses from subtle to less-than-subtle actions of emotional and practical withdrawal in some aspects of school, but also of frustration in their subsequent work lives after time passed. The decision to return to education could be seen as a response to their un- or misrecognised potential and represent the shift that Fraser (2003) discussed in the struggle to find place and recognition through accessible institutional patterns. She recognised that there are psychological- and identity-led causes to misrecognition, but that they are not unrelated to the effects of maldistribution of equality. The narratives here conform with this proposition. Opportunities in support roles in educational spaces was the start of the search for status, whether initially intentional or not. There followed determination to make others notice their contribution in order to get nearer to needs that were not yet recognised. These became apparent with being recognised initially as able practitioners and highly valued in the workplace.

#### *iv) Temperament and values*

Common to each participant, was the similarity of their espoused values in relation to life and work. Each, having rejected an academic route, came to a point when they reached a glass ceiling both financially and intellectually in their jobs and searched

for more meaning to their work lives. Jess spoke of HE 'opening her mind', her beliefs changed, she questioned more and became more confident as she began to understand societal challenges. This included further personal disorientation when they realised that they were also part of the system and ultimately recognised the constraints of the job. Josie realises now that she has a lot to offer, that she had outgrown her first teaching job and has now taken on a maths specialist role in order to 'change mindsets in lost communities' and support 'families on the brink'. Jasmine said that the more she understood, the more ethical her practice became. At first, she would just replicate teaching, but then began to create meaning and purpose in the activities planned. Ronnie recognises boundaries for behaviour and where challenges play out, she likes the responsibility and challenge of making things work, and sees researching, decision-making and finding solutions to problems powerful. Katie says that it is significant that she has always been recognised as caring and with helping others by family and at school, perhaps a reason for returning to a context that values these attributes now she has more confidence and is emotionally more settled. Katie appears to be comfortable in her field and can now make a difference in a way that upholds her ethical values.

Each individual describes their route as requiring discipline. Managing family life, work and study was very challenging, but was enabled by time management and through proactive family support mechanisms, mostly from parents. All participants had significant family support once they embarked on their ambition to be a class teacher. They each saw the route they took as the only pragmatic way to eventually get to their end goal.

The next set of sub-section categories also refer to evidence over time of the affective impact initiated in their schooldays and into their careers, firstly recognising placement of *v) school as a social venue*; then conceding ownership of life events in *vi) 'life happens'*; a need for *vii) scaffolded learning*; the value of *viii) family and friends' know-how*; the influence of *ix) parental assiduousness*; the *x) positive influences of friends, communities and colleagues* and the significant challenge of *xi) negotiating childcare and family life*.

## **Embodiment of social influences**

### *v) School as a social venue*

Whilst home events impacted on their lives at different times, there is a marked similarity in the plummet in satisfaction by all participants when at high school. For Amanda this was also influenced by reasons relating to family breakdown, but each participant spoke of lack of understanding and institutional support at school; instead, the venue provided them and their peers with a social hub.

Claudine was always at school but used it as a social venue. She recounts, now with embarrassment, how she thought it was funny at the time to be thrown out of her science class. Katie also had a good friendship group, but she said her reports always said she seemed distracted. Amanda also remembers school as a social venue, 'I don't remember much about studying. I remember just having a really good time, with my friends, not studying... you know, we used to get up to all sorts, actually.' Jess, however, identified one subject that helped her to 'be out there' and improved her confidence:

I did really well in drama and I got an A in drama and I only pushed myself to do it because of my fear of being out there and doing something but it interested me and I thought I quite like that and so I did it and really enjoyed it... But that was the first thing that really surprised me because I always thought I was so shy (Jess).

Ronnie described her school days as about 'places and people, rather than learning', being valued as a social member when not valued for academic capacity was a common thread. Family and life events were closely linked to satisfaction levels, but intrinsically linked with school outcomes.

### *vi) Life happens*

Jess's teachers and parents wanted her to stay on for sixth form, but she said she'd had enough, 'I didn't want to stay on and do A-Levels because I'd had enough of academic work and I felt I'd worked hard for my GCSE; some I was happy with, but not others ... when I realised how much work was involved to do something like that I just thought I needed to leave school.' For her, the mediocre reward was not enough.

'It caused a lot of tension between me and my mum. My mum and dad are both nurses, so they've studied and worked, and my dad has



always worked hard and they've both gone higher up in nursing and I think they both wanted something better for me than what I was doing at the time. But when you're young you don't always see it' (Jess).

For Josie, an operation needed at the beginning of high school 'completely knocked me sideways ... I lost my way a little bit' and then school asked her to leave just before GCSEs because she was pregnant, 'ending up in that situation, being pregnant and all the finger pointing and the, you can imagine goes along with having a child at sixteen, so I guess the self-esteem just goes' (Josie).

When Amanda was thirteen with her parents separated, her mum became ill. She stopped going to school, stayed out late, fell out with her sibling and ran away from home, staying with a friend's family. At fourteen she went to live with her father, who she had not seen for some time previously. On returning regularly to school, 'they told me that I would probably have no chance of passing any of my GCSEs, because I'd missed so much school' (Amanda). Interestingly, once her mother recovered, she trained as a teacher and it was at her recommendation that Amanda thought to return to HE.

'My mum's family were all very academic. My dad, my dad's family, not at all. But my mum's family, very much so and very influential. As much as me and my mum didn't get on, she always wanted to push us, you see, which is interesting isn't it. Because to be fair, I thought I was stupid, I didn't think I was, you know, could study or learn, or, but there you go' (Amanda).

#### *vii) Scaffolding learning*

All participants had examples of major influences that impacted on their learning. Encouragement, or lack of it, at school was central to how the participants felt about their intendant behaviours and their likelihood to succeed. Jasmine felt she had a lack of teacher support as work got harder at school and was disorientated in the sixth form when she was told she would never be able to do as well as her peers. She consistently got 15/20 for work, but no comments, 'I remember just seeing a mark and it stayed the same mark for the whole of those two years.' There was a perception in the narratives of lack of real interest in them as valued contributors to school/life and this was central to their discomfort. They felt their social world was important to their esteem when they were not encouraged or valued as learners. Feelings of rejection at school shifted them from a context they did not feel a part of,

and away from being confronted with work that was not explained, away from a site that illuminated their insignificance. Importantly, they all spoke of wanting to contribute to life, but could not see a way to make that happen in school.

I still think that I wasn't supported at school. I mean if I can't ask more than once, that I don't understand something and I don't feel that's a failure on my behalf, erm, but there wasn't anybody, you know, there wasn't any support groups, you just went into your lesson and you came out and I think that, and you were in sets, with tables, and that's it, you know.

Whilst Amanda had missed a lot of school, she also had influential family and friends that supported her, with her aunt and uncle helping her achieve her only GCSE successes in English and maths. Her form tutor was friends with her uncle, and they were able to find a year-long course in pre-vocational education for her to attend. In later years it was her mum that encouraged her to study at University.

*viii) Family and friends' know-how*

Within the data are strong examples of direction and help from significant others, without which their lives would have taken another direction. These participants had people around them that recognised their individual needs and also reinforced recognition that the core subjects (particularly maths and English) are essential for more satisfying progression in life.

In her final two years, Katie enlisted her grandad's maths support and was able to enter the higher tier maths exam, achieving a B of which she is proud. Likewise, Amanda, despite leaving home had family approach her with help with study. Her aunt and uncle tutored her to achieve her GCSEs in English literature and language and maths, 'those are the only GCSEs that I got.'

Josie's pregnancy prior to GCSEs meant she was moved out of school, in retrospect, she reflected, for their convenience, though at the time she thought they were being kind. However, it was the faith the maths teacher had in her that enabled her to successfully to take maths and English at foundation level in GCSE re-sits. He gained permission to speak to her parents and offered tuition in the two subjects, with help from a colleague to teach the English. The significance of someone who had 'faith in me'(Jess) or 'believed in me' (Josie) is evident in all the narratives and may contribute to these participants being able to position themselves as feasible

returners to education. Family recognition of education as a way to improve career possibilities was evident throughout the data.

*ix) Parental assiduousness*

Each participant put strong emphasis on the 'hard work' that was demonstrated by their parents. The fathers, they described as feeling unfulfilled in their work in building trades, junior management, engineering. Their mothers had part-time jobs and were home makers though only one of the mothers did not work at all. It is perhaps significant that whilst these participants are categorised in widening participation bands on their entry to higher education, their profiles suggest that they have shared characteristics of either parental belief in the power of education or were influenced by significant others to return to education. All but one set of parents openly valued education for career progression but, for some, the participants reported that their parents did not know how to support academic aspirations in their children's school years. Katie's mother had a number of part-time jobs when she was bringing up the family, then worked in a bank until recent redundancy spurred her into beginning what has become a highly successful small business. Jess' parents were both in the health service, worked hard and had wanted Jess to stay on at school, but she wanted to earn.

*x) Positive influences: friends, community, colleagues*

As the data emerged, it confirmed that whilst educational policy during this era opened opportunities in access to HE, those that were able to make changes to their own and/or their family's lives had to have significant supporters along the life course in order to succeed, be that parents, partners, head teachers, colleagues or friends. Each talked about the uncertainty, sacrifices and time taken in the routes they took, recognising why many would not have been able to do it. Most significantly, there were a lot of examples of encouragement from significant people in their lives and by a subsequent thirst for knowledge that drove them on. Claudine acknowledged the closeness of her community as a big deal in the pathway to becoming a teacher, 'I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own, no, no'.

Support from significant others was important to all participants and they acknowledged that they needed that support at different times to be able to develop

their careers in the way they have. This was from immediate family, parents and partners, but also teachers who showed regard for them at particular times. Being valued or being seen as valuable to contribute was important and an aspect missing from much of their high school years. To shift both positive and negative self-perspectives takes time. On the one hand, it took long term, concerted effort to overcome internally and externally received negative messages about themselves, yet they held tight and got inspiration and hope from positive messages heard, sometimes from many years ago. Fulfilment of potential seemed to be achieved through the ability to fathom the subtle changes within the field, to notice signposting of opportunity and to have moral support to try, plus an inner drive to want to play a worthy part in life. The narratives illustrated below highlight ways in which this was recognised.

Each participant described their own parents as 'non-academic', only Amanda recognised that on her mother's side the family were 'academic' and that 'academic' influence and support from her husband's family was significant in her capacity to follow a teaching route. Amanda's unsettled upbringing was still underpinned by respect for education as an instrument of opportunity, and she had family connections to keep her 'on track'.

Jasmine's siblings brought home to her that they would be more likely have career opportunities in the long term because they had a degree; Ronnie, Jasmine, Anna, Amanda and Josie were encouraged by their head teachers to pursue a teaching route when they were TAs. This was highly encouraging, for instance with support to enter part-time HE for FD study and later for teaching placements during their teacher training years. Amanda said she used informal connections to find out and prepare for her TA interview and it was her mum who found out about and encouraged her to do the FD. Katie was also encouraged by the head teacher, to do a FD with the subsequent aim of doing teacher training. By the end of the three-year course, the school changed their head teacher in a move to Academy status and the new head teacher was unwilling to support her development any further. A job advertised at the previous head teacher's new school gave her the start she needed. The school supported her to complete the HTLA that she had self-funded to date. At this juncture, her progress appeared as dependent on a mixture of policy influence, personal professional support and going where opportunities arose.

Josie had experienced encouragement at two stages in her school life from teachers, which she defined as highly significant to her. At middle school the athletics teacher 'sort-of took me under his wing' and she became confident in her academic studies. Then once more, by another teacher when she was supported with maths and English GCSEs after she became pregnant and was encouraged to leave school. Later, she had unfailing encouragement from the head teacher at the school where she continued to work until very recently.

Anna has two strong negative memories of adults from primary school that she carries with her, one with a controlling teacher and secondly, being made to eat over-salted dinners served by older children; Anna still does not eat salty foods. However, a history teacher inspired her by his 'passion' for the subject showing how important these relationships are to engagement in study. She reflected that:

'learning was very, very different to anything, anything these days. You had board rubbers chucked at you and everything like that. But there are those certain people who have stood out, you know because they had an interest in me and they had an interest in, in what they were doing themselves.'

At school most of her subjects, she felt, were about rote learning and retain-repeat processes; she contrasted A-level study with the autonomous learning at degree level, where she was in charge of her own learning and thrived.

These narratives underscore the importance of recognition by significant others in progress, challenge and fulfilment and how these signals pervaded their positioning of self. The embodiment of forms of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem (Honneth, 1995) seemed deeply held, yet the positive associations began to transform weaknesses in confidence over time. In consequence, as career opportunities came and went, it was apparent that their positioning (social, economic, cultural) in the field at particular times was significant. Their ability to have a footing from which to navigate their careers depended on the structural and social contexts, which shifted this balance over time. This notion is recognised throughout this section of the chapter (embodied influence of individuals to choices) and is again integral in section 3 in their horizons for action (p.120).

xi) *Negotiating childcare and family time*

Six of the eight participants had children and required help from supportive partners/parents in order to work and study. The demand on family time is not straightforward and at times put significant pressure on their ability to continue. Social requirements and expectations of the role of mother played a part and those with supportive family over the long term valued this. Jasmine recalled how even without children family life is under pressure with the time-demands playing a large part in the challenges and sacrifices in this career path:

'I'd like to think that one day I'll find a balance between work and home life and have some time for myself as well...It is because you can give up a weekend and not see my friends or family and that is alright, but when it's every weekend and it's for a very long time you get to the point where you think that you don't really have a life anymore' (Jasmine).

Anna began work in a bank and took three years in maternity leave (unpaid) but was not allowed to go back part-time. Since her husband was working full-time, she began childminding for her own and two other children 'to pay for holidays, niceties and things'. For Anna, her husband's job was the main source of income. Voluntary work in school led to a lunchtime supervisor job and later to a classroom support assistant role that she held for 13 years. It fit well with caring for the children when they were younger and allowed her evening study time when they were old enough to occupy themselves.

By the time Claudine did her teacher training she had to do an unsalaried route, which she described as 'very annoying... I just got in debt... it was very hard having to pay for [her daughter's] childcare costs'. Her husband and both their parents have always been supportive, but also work full-time and she felt it would be worth it in the long-term. Claudine said that teacher training was 'the hardest thing I've ever done and I understand why people didn't finish the course, because if you are not a hundred percent, you've got to be committed to wanting to teach and if you're not ... you'd just leave it.' Claudine recognised that leaving teacher training courses could easily be compared to the wasted journeys Coles (2003) described. Family time and work are described as a balancing act that is negotiated given the context that the participants found themselves in at any one point, again highlighting the effects of the temporal. Claudine said there was a Masters' module that she could have done if

she did not have her daughter to care for and she recognises it is even harder for others whose families do not live locally.

Some participants delayed their plans for careers in education because they knew they would be the main carer for children. Jess remained in her retail job as it was flexible in shifts and she could not afford childcare. Even so, they juggled her husband's work patterns and had support from her mother-in-law so she could work three days a week, 'we managed it and it was the only time I was grateful that I wasn't in a career because it meant I could bring my kids up and I didn't have to stress about work and having a career'. For Josie, part-time study, alongside full-time work, was essential as a single mum of two 'but you do have that constant battle with yourself about your time that you're spending with your children...it was a constant battle'.

All participants spoke of 'wanting more' (Anna), 'something more' (Jess), prior to re-entering education. These narratives resonate with the career decisions of women with dependent children revealed by Woolnough and Redshaw (2016). They identified that whilst equality legislation (Equality Act, 2010; Shared Parental Leave Bill, 2015) has benefited areas such as flexible working, maternity and paternity rights, the reality of part-time workers as being undervalued and side-lined, penalises those balancing work and home life (Cahusac and Kanji, 2014). In addition, hegemonic masculine cultures, for example, long working hours and corresponding responsibilities, are not recognised in part-time workers and this thereby automatically limits career progression and training opportunities. Part-time employment is often associated with a downgrading of work or work that is below the potential of the returner (Woolnough and Redshaw, 2016; Grant et al, 2006). One of the areas of employment that are compatible with parental responsibilities are the more 'feminised' jobs, such as the work of TAs, and they are a pragmatic route for women, when attitudes on gender inequality in home-caring responsibilities are still commonplace (Yu and Lee, 2013). Ronnie explained, 'there's a certain type of person that becomes interested in being a teaching assistant and that's partly convenience isn't it? It's easier for you when you've got your own children.'

Six of the participants returned to forms of education after becoming parents, and later they focused on a pathway to lead them to a more recognised professional career route of teaching. The youngest participant, Katie, was the only one to complete her teaching qualification before having her first child at age 28 and

Jasmine does not have children. All participants began their first school-based work experiences as volunteers and saw a route to which they aspired and one where time challenges that are associated with 'motherhood' do not have to be hidden (Cahusac and Kanji, 2013). Return-to-work decisions after the first child, according to the research by Woolnough and Redshaw (2016) are subject to both preference and circumstance. Factors include availability of flexible working patterns, a supportive boss and colleagues, an involved partner and satisfaction with their childcare arrangements (ibid). For each of the participants in this study, a strong gratitude for family's or partner's support is evident, along with the challenges of juggling everything. Katie recognised that her peers on the HE courses with children had many more concurrent responsibilities than her and all recognised the demands this placed on their time and energy. Interestingly, there was little detail attached to these accounts of demands on their time and energy, all simply expressed the challenges as perhaps mirroring the positioning of themselves as professional women in a culture where 'unless mothers mimic successful men, they do not look the part for success in organisations' (Cahusac and Kanji, 2013). It is possible that they wanted to portray themselves as managing to me as, indeed, they *had* ultimately reached their academic goals.

Throughout study Jasmine revealed the continuous challenge:

'Others have thought I've managed it well but studying part-time and working full-time is difficult and it's finding that balance and being able to maintain some kind of social life. For me I've just committed myself to studying and I think that is what I've done over the last five years. I've taken it very seriously. I have taken it very seriously because everything else has come to a standstill and if I've got something to hand-in I'll work. I don't think I've really had a weekend – well maybe a Sunday, but now I don't have a Sunday even anymore'.

Josie's daughter has also gone into teaching, but she recalled, '...maybe sometimes he (her son) did see me sort of with my head in my hands and he's thought "do you know what, there's got to be easier ways".'

To complete this chapter, a third lens of Careership theory is used to observe evidence of breadth, depth and understanding of possible action within the structural and social fields of these participants. That is, the opportunities and barriers that are



within the sphere of possibility, which could be hidden or visible to the individuals. The following sections have overlap and resonance with those mentioned above. The themes that are most significant in the data set are highlighted as: readiness and confidence; hitting a ceiling; positioning in the field and recognising game-playing.

### **3) Horizons for action**

#### **Readiness and confidence**

Across the data, it is evident that the participants' horizons for action are influenced by that which is structurally available at particular points in time, but it is also entirely entwined with individual readiness and confidence, as well as affected by family expectation and social context, and most importantly, these factors change over time.

Each of these participants had been encouraged in their primary education with either individual teachers who were identified as a source of inspiration or later with significant others such as family members with academic skills, or encouragement from parents or siblings or support by head teachers or managers. Even with teenager/parent tensions, they all recognized their parents' attitude to education as a potential enabler in life. Subsequently, they too aligned with this conviction when searching for change in their own career paths. Each of these people provided a powerful supply of encouragement, signifying a need for confirmation from people who 'believed in me'(Josie) or 'had faith in me'(Jess). Interestingly, each participant held their own moral ground and had confidence in themselves as a good and capable person and wanted to be proactive in contributing to their (work or social) community. This desire to contribute appeared to only be rewarded if it served the immediate targets of the system, such as in unproblematic, tidy, convenient and timely learning. That is, being able to absorb, understand and react in the ways the educational system wanted and at the time allotted. Timely connections and internalisation of cultural practices and values within a school classroom culture were required. This supports the notion that being valued positively *and* being enabled to make meaningful connections can either facilitate or undermine growth (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Through the Bourdieuan lens underpinning Careership theory, the data collected from my participants suggested a notable relationship that linked the

necessity of having supportive social conditions to being able to fulfil opportunity. Over the course of time, these participants used their 'enablers' to make up the confidence required in the balance of 'relatedness, competency and autonomy' that Ryan and Deci (2006; 2017) argued is necessary for self-esteem and ability to connect. Neo-liberalism interprets this facility as an individual's responsibility, but at the same time an alternative lens (Careership) reveals additional barriers faced as politically and culturally derived and that these are different at different times. As example, Jasmine's experience at school where she initially was encouraged and achieved well changed when in a new sixth form she was identified as different and expected to achieve less well than her peers. In this example, the school system is seen to have supported and then devastated Jasmine's horizons for action, despite strong ongoing parental support and encouragement, the impact of which lasted many years. Through this lens, it appears it is (in part) an unfolding result of discriminatory teacher expectation. Teachers had a particular expectation of the sixth form students and teachers perceived the problem as individualised, located in an unfamiliar (to them) second language. This attitude was recalled by Jasmine as unsurmountable, thereby biasing her perceived horizon for action. She withdrew her university application, as she feared the possibility of failure and 'wanted to close the door on education'. She achieved three 'B' grades at A-Level, yet the reflective picture Jasmine describes suggests a time and place where the habitus in school was inflexible and limiting for 'someone like me'. Jasmine at no time referred to her ethnicity, but maybe by proxy she spoke of English being perceived as a second language as the excuse given for teachers' lack of engagement with her progress. As a researcher, it suggested inherent institutionalised inequities as a ground for perpetuating disadvantage and is an area that in retrospect I should have explored more in the interview process. The underperformance then is a political and societal responsibility, as well as familial and individual.

The participants' experiences of how they were perceived by others was a common factor in their sense of self-esteem. None of the participants felt that, intrinsically, they were incapable of contributing to life in a meaningful way but felt that high school generated in them a feeling of being inconsequential to the school's cause and that their potential was either not considered relevant or dismissed. They were accommodated in the school space, but not included. Their dismissal was identified by them as intrinsically indirect, either by teachers not having time to explain or to

understand their challenges, built from habituated (mis)understandings or ignorance, or was a result of the business of having to expediate perpetual educational change along with evidencing raising of standards. So subtly visible, yet strongly embedded and felt, are the effects of the underlying actions in the site that it caused these participants to be and feel side-lined. Anna remarked on one of her daughters, described as having 'gone down the less academic route' and finding school difficult, but now in her element and for the first time being rewarded for achieving well in a 'hands-on' course at college. Anna ruminated on why the educational system does not encourage 'non-academic' intelligence, '[it's] a real shame, because if she had of had that opportunity, she would have flourished an awful lot earlier.'

Evidence in the participants' subsequent careers, their high degree qualifications (2:1s and 1sts) and their proven stamina may seem at odds with an argument that I have formed that not everyone has the capacity in forms of capital to do this. This centres *not* around their ability, but the effects from sites of learning that hinder intellectual growth, social barriers and where there is no flexibility for non-normative timescales of readiness for active engagement or deep processing to occur.

There is also evidence of resultant protection of self-esteem where participants attributed underperformance to their own intentional or unintentional lack of effort (rather than their lack of ability), which according to Covington and Omelich's (1979) thesis, is likely if self-esteem is low. These participants had family support at different stages, which if Covington and Omelich's (1979) proposition holds, suggests family encouragement can be even more important than role models or teacher expectations, although their study is cross-sectional research about family support at University for young people on normative routes to HE. As such, evaluation of this study's data led to an adjacent tack where the strength of family commitment was particularly important, even when intermittent. In this study, very strong but often shorter-term significant relationships remained significantly powerful in directing, navigating and enabling at specific times in the life course.

### **Hitting a ceiling**

This study considers the careers of women and their non-traditional routes to becoming teachers and, as such, needed to acknowledge how their life experiences are affected by their gender, as well as other definers such as class and ethnicity.

Whilst 'hitting a glass ceiling' is not necessarily unique to a single gender, there was evidence of 'wasted talent' (Brown and Hesketh, 2004) from these female participants; potential that was seemingly hovering with nowhere to go once they had established themselves in their first workplace. Even their positioning in the labour market was as Brown and Hesketh (2004) described, characterised by ready-built barriers to tough-entry jobs. Further restrictions to progress in careers thwarts Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups in particular who are under-represented by a 40% gap in top jobs, even including and compared to other racialised groups, (Friedman and Laurison, 2020, p.40). This study charts careers that are not located in the 'top' jobs but also seem to be affected by a socio-political homophily, where people favour those similar to themselves in terms of characteristics such as age, race, gender or religion (ibid). The argument therefore follows that normative expectations are more readily accepted by society, whilst support mechanisms for non-standard entry to HE is still side-lined.

In a similar vein to other studies (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000), Jasmine and other participants in this study say in retrospect, that they were deflected from further or higher education as school leavers, but re-entered education in response to 'hitting a ceiling' in their careers (Colley et al, 2014, p.8). This happened when the immediate, very much welcomed, but ultimately limited financial reward from their first jobs levelled off. Jasmine also recognised the need to change careers for personal and ethical reasons. She identified the demands of meeting financial targets at work verging on amoral and unsatisfying. A discussion about possible opportunities with her siblings who had subsequently gained degrees, was what spurred her to change career.

The participants have commonly identified the same problems that Weeks (2011) described in early careers/work lives: low wages, underemployment and precarious employment, but also a 'glass ceiling' effect predicated on the type, as well as level, of previous qualifications. Weeks (2011) argues that work is not just an economic practice, where individuals are expected to participate, but that at the same time the structures and perceptions of the status of jobs and wage levels also identifies a social order. It became clear in the analysis of the participants' data that they came to a point where they felt under-used and stuck in the workplace, at which point, they sought pragmatic ways within the system to navigate an alternative route to a more satisfying way to contribute to life.

During the 2000s, the Labour government actively recruited and increased the use of TAs in schools and learning support roles elsewhere (Blatchford et al, 2009). This was the means of entry to an educational site that they had returned to via a social structure that used qualification as currency and ordering. Participants used phrases such as 'I wanted something more' (Jess) or in a desire to be 'contributing to life' (Jess and Josie). This happened at different stages in their lives and was recognised by Anna in identifying a return to education as 'the right time in life for her'. Anna's children were less dependent, she had contributed to the mortgage payments and for the first time Anna's horizons for action were broad enough to consider this route. For Jess, taking a new direction was only possible when she was 'feeling strong', referring to adjustment to an untimely family bereavement and holding the family together.

These examples also illuminate gendered divisions of labour common to all the participants, with parenting responsibilities and family commitments and also included their necessary contributions to mortgage repayments or household resources. The transition to the ultimate goal of teacher recognised a desire for 'wanting more' (Anna) for herself both intellectually, monetarily and in 'giving back' to society. '...all the small steps that I've done since then have obviously been aiming towards, towards one thing, and I've got there' (Anna). Waiting for a 'right time' to re-qualify was not an option for Josie, a single mother, and there was a sense of being capable of doing more and finding a route by which this could be achieved was, in the first instance, pragmatic.

There was a sense, though subtly noted, that the 'ceiling' they had formally reached was in part because of their home and work roles, but change also coincided with a growing command in a belief in their capabilities, especially when they were recognised by others in their studies and at work. There were no outwardly sexist behaviours mentioned, rather the influences are noticeable in the subtle assumptions that are identified in feminist literature, for example in the notion of 'Invisible women' (Criado Perez, 2019), where the author exposes data bias 'in a world designed for men'. Keeping this notion in mind, I explore these participants' positioning (including horizons for action) in the structural and social field.

## **Positioning in the field**

Each participant regarded teacher status as valued social positioning and they recognised how its status was ranked positively through others' eyes in their social arena. They anticipated that teacher status would allow more command over, and add meaning to, their lives. The longitudinal scale of this study offered me the opportunity to observe what had occurred during some of these years and to reflect on life course experiences (structural and social) that influenced the re-positioning of themselves in the field of employability. Seven of the eight achieved qualified teacher status by 2016 and Jess now has a university appointment. They have realised their ambitions, or an adapted version of their original aspirations. In the long term, their careers were enabled and restricted by the socio-economic context of the time and navigated through 'endurance and negotiation within their everyday gender regimes' (Lee, 2019, p.95) and this took time.

The participants' narratives illuminated how they adapted to the culture of the classroom and educational system over time, which meant that the norms of this field of practice became inculcated in their behaviours. In turn, this made the transition to teacher status more fluent than examples they gave of those younger and newly out of teacher training with less experience in classrooms. Anna recalled how her lengthy experience in the classroom enabled her to use experience gathered over time. Talking about another new teacher she reported:

'...she deals with things in a different way and sometimes you do have to just bite your tongue and be like okay, you can deal with them like that and see how you go... but I think I have throughout the years, and this probably does help with the knowledge side of things.' (Anna)

The part-time nature and length of time this route took, suggests that the transitions to the new field of professional practice were necessarily incremental and required change in how they became perceived to belong in the educational environment (as an embodied and socialised habitus). The TAs were exposed to classroom-based conditions and adopted both unconscious patterns in practices through socialisation in the field and embodied patterns of reaction by working in the context in which they studied. Jasmine noted that there was significant difference between those newly qualified from subject degrees:

It's the students who have maybe done a science degree and some that have come from a very different background such as engineering.

They might have some experience in working in schools, but I suppose... I went through the motions when I first started working in a school and maybe that is where they are at the moment.

Their acceptance in the field came and went in phases, initially with the acknowledgement or nudging from others, 'you need to become a teacher' (Katie's head teacher) to self-belief, 'I could make a difference' (Jess) or 'I could do more than this' (Josie) and then on to the dispositions they developed and were able to evidence in the process. This was verified in a range of emotional expressions such as metaphors of being 'the last piece in the jigsaw' (Katie) and corroborations of self-sufficiency and control in 'I can hold my own and every time you do something like that, it makes you feel that bit stronger' (Jess).

The field remained hierarchical and competitive, but for a while their movement and expression within was enabled. The TAs seemed to show some evidence of claiming subjective agency, or at least negotiation, in using their newly acquired skills and with knowledge learnt in HE to make positive differences in the classroom.

...it helped me understand my role within the classroom. And it empowered me because I understood what I was doing and that makes a huge difference (Jasmine).

Whilst Bourdieu suggested that individuals may think they are pursuing their own chosen goals but that these are 'not intrinsically rational and calculative' (Jenkins, 2002, p. 72), my findings equate better with Wacquant's (1989, p.45) position that 'we can always say that individuals make choices, as long as we do not forget that they do not choose the principles of those choices' (Wacquant, 1989, p.45). Jess recognised this, '...actually, you are not free to teach; you are not free to do what you want within that workplace because you've got all these constraints and you are jumping through hoops all the time.'

### **Recognising game playing**

A low frequency node in my data, 'playing the game' serves as an important insight that sheds light on the conditions of play and resulting tension for teachers and teacher trainees. Here, interviewee Josie reflected by critically questioning some school practices:

'it's all about the data and I've never realised that, even though I've worked in schools for a long time, I didn't realise how much you play the game for the data' [When discussing with another teacher he responded]... 'you can't say that, I'm like yeah, but it is and he's like I know, but like well why can't you say it, because that's, that's just how it is'.

Josie had insight into the necessity to meet targets as priority, sometimes compromising theoretically sound educational ideas and personal values. Josie identified that her colleague was less cognisant or accepting of how this primary focus on targets maintains (for her) an unsatisfactory status quo. She ascribed her ability to recognise these uncomfortable conditions coming from high level critical attribution developed during her HE study.

Jess had a similar reflection,

'The more I learnt the more I realised ...you start to question things and see them from a different angle and actually we were an outstanding school, but we weren't. You start to begin to dig deeper then and think that this isn't really how it's been painted but I thought I would bide my time because they were being supportive with the training and they'd paid quite a lot towards the course fees so the support was there in that sense. So, I carried on.'

Education as a transformative process was also exemplified by Jess' comment:

'I never understood the political side of it because my family were never interested in politics but ... with actually looking into all the ideologies and things it begins to make sense and then you can see why you are doing what you're doing in schools and what impact that has...I don't think I opened my mind to that [socio-political context] until I did [my degree] really ...I'd never have thought of those things before.'

Similarly, Jasmine said, 'I began to understand things better; I started to reflect on my teaching practice and I just didn't take things for granted. I was beginning to think 'why am I doing this and what purpose does it serve?'

## **Concluding discussion**

There have been a number of themes discussed thus far in this chapter, including key drivers of wanting to contribute to society, live an ethically defined life, as well as having command in their roles in society, and personal economic gain for the benefit of their families. The ability to enable these were influenced by individual's readiness



and confidence at particular times, timely connections made with influential others and structural status and policy directions impacting on available decisions. The next section discusses how balancing risk and opportunity changed over time in personal, societal and structural ways.

### **Risk and opportunity**

Hodkinson's (2008) research suggested that when career guidance was outside the perceived horizons of individuals, they were likely to be ignored, which can be understood in any point in time when one is not aware of possibilities or is knowingly or unknowingly barred by social or structural conventions. But, as time passed, these participants' horizons for action are evidenced to shift with:

- the influences in the *positioning* in the field
- through their *changing* dispositions (embodied and social)
- through their *growing* understanding and knowledge of the field and self.

This suggests that time and timing is a critical element in the risk and opportunity equation and this is now explored further below.

### **Time and Timing**

Each participant in the study was enabled or thwarted in their vicarious educational and career routes. Whilst the lens of Careership offers a cohesive and compatible method of analysing this data, the additional focus on time and timing locates their decisions in a way that does not replicate a traditional 'trajectory'. It details the circular, family-led and complex aspects of these participants' careers across time, described by Hughes (Colley, 2007, p.434) as 'female' time characteristics. These can be compared to 'male' characteristics of clock driven, employment related and predictable linear career trajectories. Hodkinson (2008) argued that normative assumptions that reflect these 'male' characteristics form the basis of policy and is therefore uncharacteristic of increasingly diverse lives and families. In agreement, I argue that we should ascribe importance to hidden attributes and dispositions within groups to improve access and progress to and through educational environments. In addition to this important aspect, my thesis proposes that noticing the effects of 'time and timing' also needs to be integrated into the analysis. In this

study, the examination is enabled through the methods used to represent the participants' views alongside the temporal changes affecting their horizons for action. Figures 18 & 19 show a simplified version of the participants' satisfaction levels over time, which suggests a non-problematic route from school leaver to teacher (a trajectory). Whereas, the details noted in Figure 20, along with the policy influences and narratives, give an insight that replicates the nuanced and complex characteristics of 'female' time.

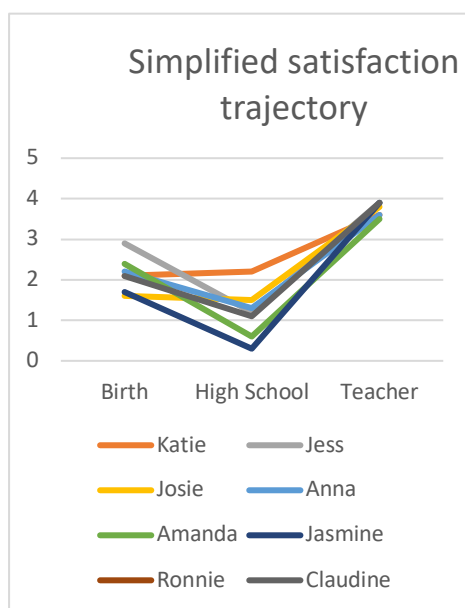


Figure 19 Simplified time (all).

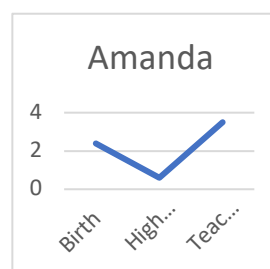


Figure 18 Amanda, simplified trajectory

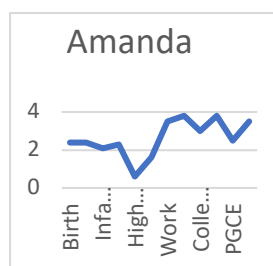


Figure 20 Amanda, satisfaction line.

Colley (2007) offered three considerations required to analyse the effect of time, she described the macro perspective to be about the 'epoch' (showing increasing neo-liberalism in this context) and how the participants survived, resisted and/or were enabled in their career routes in relation to these forces. The 'meso' level was noticing what influences were significant in historical periods of time (such as, who was in government, development of equality legislation, geographic context et cetera) and in this study are seen illustrated with the timeline of policy alongside self-drawn satisfaction assessments and verbal narrative data. The 'micro' perspective focuses on moments that present challenges or facilitation at the time decisions are made in the context they are experienced. At this micro level, these participants described their 'free time' as very limited and as Bryson described 'fragmented and unpredictable' (2007, p.104). The advent of a competitive, neo-liberal society across

the lifespan of these participants and during this study has resulted in 'time squeeze' for women, for instance with longer and more complex routes of travel to work (Bryson, 2007). 'Trip chaining' (Criado Perez, 2019) is multitasking on journeys, for example, visits to relatives, food and essential shopping or picking children up on the way to or from work, tasks that are often taken up by women in the household and squeezed into non-work hours. However, these participants have all recognised that they had *some* timely support when it was needed from family members that had enabled them to pursue their careers and they also acknowledged an impossibility for those that do not have this support network.

The responses in this study gave data that, on first viewing, shared many similarities and some unique differences between respondents in terms of themes emerging. For example, family support from partners and parents were significant in participants' strength to carry on when study seemed to go on for ever, suggesting that this may be a requirement for 'success'. Participants' stories of peers who did not continue HE or career hopes suggest that timing, policy, family and dispositions did not match for them. The 'right time' for the participants to turn to education depended on their familial or social context and/or the strength of their own emotional fortitude or maturity and were dependent on key life challenges or enablers. Importantly, these were also entirely co-dependent on the political influence that enabled or hindered their access to HE. They were affected by the myriad of policy change that had to be adapted to and navigated over this time as well as their familial responsibilities. When and how they experienced these changes also depended on their start dates accessing HE.

It could be argued that life courses are becoming increasingly complex and therefore less predictable and this method enables a glimpse into the world that is otherwise not sufficiently registered to note subjective and objective relations with time (Colley, 2007). The lens of Careership theory, with an enhanced focus on the temporal, contributes to a model of analysis that could be useful when replicated in other contexts, but also serves well to extrapolate the influences of often short-term or quickly changing educational policy on the people on the ground and how that is experienced by those players.

The examined evidence from my interview data begins to tentatively suggest that the 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson, 2008) in these women's life narratives, at any given time, are non-linear, complex and the way in which 'time' (social, historical and

chronological) is experienced, cannot be precluded from analysis, as this affects their horizons in a way that is typical to these participants, but is atypical in terms of normative descriptors of careers trajectories, on which policy is based.

### **Mitigating the structural through recognition**

These participants, all of whom have reached teacher/lecturer status attribute their achievements to the financial, emotional and practical support they had from family over a long period of time, even, and especially, through times of crisis. Consistent with Nowak et al's (2013) study, they felt that the somewhat family-friendly work timings in educational structuring made this route a feasible option, but it was the management level support from individual deputy head teachers/head teachers that were most central to whether they were emotionally and practically supported through their HE studies. This was exemplified in Katie's experience when head teachers changed and she was no longer supported in her studies and left adrift until she took it upon herself to change schools.

Whilst all are currently happy with their careers, they also recognise the challenges faced in education:

'I mean I worked so hard to get my degree but the government just don't think about the wider picture and how it affects people with all these decisions that they make and so I don't know if that is what I want to do. I know that whatever I do will have a bigger responsibility and I do want that, but I just think that at the minute the stress is too much in primary schools.' (Jess).

Jess is able to critically articulate her viewpoint, 'actually, you are not free to teach; you are not free to do what you want within that workplace because you've got all these constraints and you are jumping through hoops all the time'. She uncomfortably recognised herself as part of a 'tick-boxing' structure that distracts from what the children need. However, study in HE has also positively disrupted ingrained judgements about people's abilities and obstacles to work, 'when you look back you think 'oh that's very narrow-minded' but that's what I was like...' (Jess). Amanda is not as sure now as she was, 'I'm only coming new to this, I've got another twenty-five years, you know, at the time I was quite excited about it. But I'm already

five years in, thinking another ten years, I don't know.' Yet in the next breath she says:

I've got a class of twenty-seven, but I've got ten that are severely SEN... I've got four boys that are severely autistic and I've got a severely autistic girl, which is amazing, because they say that girls are very different and she is, she's unbelievable... But I love it, this class in particular (Amanda).

The study as a whole reflects experiences in a dominant neo-liberal model of education and the workplace that values functional competency and orderly behavioural outcomes. Within this context it made non-normative career routes only possible where they were admitted to the field but the experiences remained challenging. Claudine recognised, after her second child that conditions were likely to be hard if she was unable to return as part-time:

I hope I can go back, because I've asked for part-time, I won't work anymore than part-time because I've done full-time since she were eighteen month and I'm not willing to do it ... and I don't know if I could with two, full-time. I would be able to, but it, I'd just be an emotional wreck (Claudine).

Study in HE enabled these participants to develop the three levels of recognition that Honneth (1995) proposed are needed, those of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. The realisation of increased self-confidence is seen in this study through both supportive familial and work-based relationships along with receiving increased acknowledgement of respect in educational work environments. The ability to replicate such respect to others in their charge is evident in the way the participants work with their TAs.

I very much like to work in, in erm, partnership, with my teaching assistants. So, try to give her the planning at the beginning of the week, so she can see what happens. I try to discuss things with her, so that I can see what she thinks about, about that, erm, and very much, we've got that two-way, two-way communication thing going. Erm, I listen to her ideas and she's sort of like said a couple of things to me, well don't you think that that would be better like that and we've sort of, we've tried to work together, erm, which is very different to experiences that I've had ... they have just as much responsibility in that class as you, because they're going to be working with the children, they're going to be teaching them just the same as you. Yeah, I'm the one that's

planned it all, but they're still delivering what I've planned. Erm, so to have that two-way connection going, to me, that's vital (Katie).

Josie reaffirmed her understanding of effective support to and from TAs:

I have been through this process and what skills I've got that I can give to other people ... I know what a teaching assistant feels like, I know what a student teacher feels like, I know what it's like to have your own class in your NQT year.

There is evidence here of the potential benefits if management value and effectively deploy TAs, rather than concurrence with the criticism of the TA role as perpetuating need for support, or not on average providing positive benefits (Educational Endowment Foundation, nd). This study also suggested weak deployment capacities at organisational level, whereas Jess, Katie & Josie all comment on how they can use and plan TAs roles in their classroom more effectively having previously worked in that role.

The growth of self-esteem is seen through acknowledgement of their work having value to others, as well as themselves. Each participant states their drive was to uphold and contribute to democratic educational values. As Jasmine reflects, '...teachers are not always perfect. I'd like to think that I became more ethical in what I did.' Whilst Amanda explained, 'we've got a massive percentage on free School meals, you know, higher than the average and all that sort of thing and I suppose you just, I just think, I'm doing something', Jasmine recognised her own moral positioning 'I think I was able to be empathetic and I could understand what they might feel'.

Jasmine also reflected on the advice from her parents 'they were very keen [on supporting her education] because they understood the struggle of finding work and being able to participate in society, because it is hard. Language barriers can create so many other barriers for you as you progress through life'. She went on to explain the importance of 'genuinely wanting to help children' and seeing the teacher role as preparing them for the future, 'if it's just a job then you are doing the children a disservice... that in-depth understanding of being able to reflect and having that understanding that your actions can have implications on children. Having that sensitivity is what will make me a good teacher.'

Fleming (2016) extended recognition theory in his work to discuss the emancipatory potential of adult education, where self-esteem, agency and autonomy can be

developed through the freeing of 'undeveloped capability' (p.18) and, thereby, being of emancipatory value. This was evidenced at different times for these participants, Ronnie said that she had no thoughts of becoming a teacher at first, but as she progressed, she realised she could 'take it a step further'. Jasmine noticed as she did her Foundation degree that 'it was no longer actions; it had a purpose. And that's when I started to understand a lot more about education.' It took Anna a while to let go of 'those misgivings that I can't get a degree, I didn't get my A-levels, you need A-levels to get a degree'.

Certainly, these participants and family members, held 'good' teachers and the institution of education in esteem and regarded education as a route to broader choice in the wider world; this is despite the challenges that they all experienced at times in their youth. Josie felt that she could help to change mindsets in villages such as those she was brought up in, to bring hope to families in communities with lost industries and living 'on the brink'.

What opened their eyes was how the classroom environment could be changed by their presence. Ronnie gave an example:

I just found some games and played with the children and that was all about social groups and playing in the playground in that kind of thing. So, realising that I could actually do my own research. Find things and find solutions to problems that the whole school had... and keep the children entertained [and] teach them how to play then it helped everybody not just that child, but everybody else as well. (Ronnie).

As with Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1984), the effect of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capitals is interwoven in place and time. These participants described their route to teacher/lecturer status as a long-term, pragmatically achieved, dream. A state of recognition that was realised...finally. Of course, an ever-changing and occasionally marred horizon of the future was still visible, but now they have more options to respond to than they had previously.

Bourdieu's theoretical standpoint, that underpins Careership theory, recognizes that competition is present within all action within a field and, I suggest, is made more clearly visible in analysis with the combination of the diagrammatic presentations and the narratives within this longitudinal life course study approach. The elements within

economic, social, cultural and symbolic capitals, clearly impact on the complexity of negotiating careers in the wider structures, particularly for women, and the horizons for action change over time. That life is not fully deterministic because of the agency afforded to groups and individuals can be argued, but it does appear, in this study, that we also need to bear in mind there is a view of a group of women for whom 'time' is not experienced as policy and 'folklore' career trajectories assume. These participants represent the most robust in their field, those with some capital upon which to draw, yet the picture still shows structural inequities in access to educational careers and even challenges in navigating HE as mature, part-time students, who have a lot to offer society. It suggests that those with the most enabling factors, coming together in a timely fashion can succeed, but inevitably this favours some more than others. Josie's son tellingly reflected that 'there must be easier ways to make money than that' after seeing mum with her head in her hands.

### **Whose success?**

In interview, the participants were not prompted to answer questions directly on class, or of any other specific characteristic (such as race, gender, age etcetera), but subjective references to lived experiences were imbued with such examples. Their accounts, when considered alongside the contemporary socio-political influences, illuminate both enabling and restraining capabilities of the educational system. Thompson (2019) in his recent assessment of inequality and social class in education, has posited an argument, based on a range of empirical evidence, that refutes that inequality has unambiguously been reduced as HE participation has increased, or at least has only seen a shift to a limited extent. The measure of 'successful' outcome can and should also be measured in different ways. Undoubtedly, the high satisfaction ultimately achieved by these participants in their career destinations to date can be understood in the context of their perceived success and how that has evolved over time. Thompson (2019, p.7) offered compelling arguments proposing that whilst education can be a mediator in life chances, opportunities of increased income and social mobility remain challenging. Rather than offering fluidity of upward mobility there is now a 'larger pool of well-educated labour' from which employers draw. From this perspective, it means that



the level of education becomes less important than the factors that distinguish one graduate from another in their potential in terms of 'productivity'. He explains: 'Educational expansion therefore implies a need for individuals to run in order to stand still: whilst education can continue to be enjoyed as an absolute good in a consumption sense, there is a need to make strategic investments in education which maintain or improve one's standing in the labour market.' (Thompson, 2019, p.170).

In their narratives these participants have evidenced their sustained sacrifices, efforts, acquisition of learning and knowledge capacities, as well as accumulating a variety of 'graduate attributes' that they could add to their capability portfolio. They invested deeply in economic and emotional domains and saw the route through to teacher status with fortitude as policy twisted and turned direction. Whilst these women acknowledged family support, they also had the (unpaid) primary emotional responsibility of caring in their families. In order to have flexibility they were willing to accept low paid TA salaries as a long-term investment.

These TA to teacher accounts confirm that a key driver to re-enter education was a desire for increased income in the longer term, which also assumed an upward social mobility (Smith, 2018). They also all identified an individual thirst for knowledge and wish to prove themselves after disappointment in the school system. The deliberate neo-liberal emphasis on individual responsibility for social mobility had to be pursued by investment in gathering further (human) capital. Success cannot, however, account entirely on individual capital, but also must benefit within the structural forces that affect individuals differently dependent on their prior and current place in their field. These former TAs evidenced a non-too-easy ability to ride the wave of opportunity, enabled because their individual social or financial capitals were sufficient. They recognised peers and colleagues, who did not continue study or left the profession, with sage appreciation and concomitant wariness of structural gatekeeping in the maintenance of those who already have positional advantage in the field and began to recognise where social inequalities were persistent.

Successive governments can now be seen as eroding previously valued professional employment through its increasing de-professionalisation and attendant declining relational salaries, disrupting the lived experience that was not as 'respected and stable' as their parents had believed. There are complex relationships between

educational expansion and inequality and between class, ethnicity and gender; inequalities have been reduced but are still substantial (Thompson, 2019). Furthermore, those with stronger positioning in a field are still best placed to take advantage of opportunities.

Bourdieu posited that adapting to new fields of practice was difficult, but it can happen over time. These participants indicated that they were able to adapt over time because of their sustained broadening knowledge of their places of work through a long working apprenticeship in the educational environment. They were able to respond reflexively to considerations of how unequal practices become inculcated. Their understanding of how the system worked was disrupted through critical deliberation during their studies and their classroom experiences and re-assembled to enable them to become 'more ethical' (Jasmine) practitioners.

Having discussed the risks and opportunities afforded to these TAs over time and how they affect their progress in their educational careers, I close the chapter with a synthesis of the key findings discussed.

## **Synthesis of the research**

The lists below are drawn from sections of this chapter, summarise key findings from the research and identify recommendations that can be asserted from the findings.

### *Key points from findings*

- Political distrust in the teaching profession is endemic. Belief in and value of educators, in and beyond their occupational roles would enable the positive advantages of recognition to flourish.
- Misrecognition of individuals' educational value or potential can engender avoidance tactics or highlight a poor sense of representation by others and towards self.
- Recognising knowledge as a tool for good and achievable over time through family support and employing personal attributes in layered and challenging terrain.

- Contributions to society being validated and appreciated were notably important to the ability to experience a sense of belonging and enabled progress.
- The connections made between theory (developed in HE) and practice (in the work context) is hugely beneficial for critical analysis of the teaching context and in the ability to choose to implement 'ethical' teaching methods.
- Observing relationships affected by time and timing, in both historical and chronological individual contexts, aids the discovery of how the social and political contexts affect experiences differently across the life course.

### **Recommendations arising from findings:**

1. Flexible and well supported routes with advice designed for access across the life course should be supported by associated policy.
2. Cost effects of HE participation for lower paid professions needs to be addressed.
3. Attention needed to policy change that affects diverse or minority groups negatively (including mature part time students).
4. Funded investment in access opportunities at different levels acknowledging broader range of prior learning for school community members and newcomers.
5. Lower the risk threshold for entry to teaching and raise the reward between investment and work/life balance.
6. Consider ways of understanding the impact of constant flux to inform long term educational policy.
7. Careers need to balance financial gain, time needed to acquire qualification, personal satisfaction and meeting affective needs.
8. Recognition of nuances affecting individuals differently at different times, rather than expectations to fit into normative paths.

9. Value intent to meaningfully contribute to life and support non-normative routes to achieve this.

## Conclusion

### **Direction-finding and career-faring.**

The central research questions that asked how TAs negotiated a career route to teacher status and what factors enabled or hindered that process, drew on individual narratives to explore socio-cultural experiences in relation to the political landscape. When viewed from macro, meso and micro perspectives, these narratives showed intrinsic links that associated policy, agentic influences and socio-cultural impacts in multi-layered ways. It was significant that the relationships between structural, agentic and cultural domains changed over time for each individual, so the balance between opportunity and restriction see-sawed according to the relative positioning of those influences at any particular time. Relative to normative career routes to teaching, the alternative routes of these participants proved possible, but unremittingly precarious.

In this thesis, I utilised Hodkinson and Sparke's Careership theory to ultimately argue that a detailed exploration of contemporary lives is necessary to address reasons that despite existing widening participation initiatives there should be more recognition of the hidden and wasted talent that was noted at least ten years ago (Brown, 2003; Brown and Hesketh, 2004; Smith, 2010) and is still not finding equitable solutions today (Smith, 2020; Thompson, 2019; Bowl et al, 2018; Griffiths, 2017; Lindley and Machin, 2012). I suggest that new and stable teacher education routes would help avoid perpetuating homophilic educational and social policy making and support many more to contribute to and develop a career in teaching at various points across the life course.

I have focused on a specific sample of TAs and their routes to classroom teacher status by extending an element of Careership theory that recognised and focused on the effect of structure, agency and cultural influences and how to capture change over time in learning lives. I argued that by using graphic and visual elicitation and analytic techniques as methods in the research process, it exposed evidence to suggest changes in context over time, rather than assume pre-established norms in policy is current and valid for all.

All participants in the study were non-standard applicants to HE and in widening participation categories. What has emerged with this group of TAs, in their path to becoming teachers, is the significance of time and timing on that route, particularly in relation to effects in the following broad areas:

- Support mechanisms from family or significant others (socio-cultural)
- Negotiating static social structures alongside gendered cultural expectations (socio-cultural and agentic)
- Failure and success with sense of worthiness and esteem (social and agentic)
- Policy change: admittance and restriction (structural)

The first three of these areas were needed to navigate the fourth. This appeared to be made possible through submersion in the relative fields of practice so the habitus of the desired working context was subsumed, but also and essentially, alongside the development of critical capacities to understand the socio-political and economic context in which they were operating.

The findings of this study have confirmed that the reflexive approach that enabled personal and professional lives to be examined over time and in relation to socio-structural change, illuminated data that would otherwise remain underinvestigated. The willing interaction that was enabled through my former relationship as lecturer to these participants, aided access to hearing individual experiences. Respect for the private nature of some of the data collected required trust from the participants and was present in my thinking at each stage of the research process. In conjunction with the data collection and representation methods used, I collectively identified factors that illuminated their horizons for action and enabled broader insight to the relationship between structure, agency and social change as mitigating features in career choices. It is a flexible method that could be similarly replicated in other contexts.

Below is the summary of the claims I make within the research: I then address the contribution this makes to knowledge in this area.

### **Claims within the research: Noticing overlap and change in layers of agency, culture and structure over time.**

The influence of context: social, political, material, historical, economic contexts are shouting out their influence across the study. Once off the standard normative pathways, career routes were less well accepted, much more complex, took longer and were controlled by the socio-political context. The paths taken resembled negotiations of off-piste routes that were not supported or predictable and also required the assignment of durable personal characteristics with emotional and financial support over time, to access.

The analysis in this research takes into consideration the structural context as well as embodied experiences of the participants, noticing limitations and constraints within fields (*habitus*) that aid or hinder access across and through the field. The narratives offered insights to the context of these participants in their fields of action to evidence the effect of how their preconceived 'conscious decisions' were likely to be only partly autonomous and were actually dependent on the impact of policy change. Graphic representations of change in the field over time showed how intersecting historical and individual contexts both hindered and aided the discovery of the latent possibilities in these participants' horizons for action and illuminated how and when this occurred during their life course.

#### *Agency in career-faring*

With reference to autonomy or agency, much adaptation took place. The atypical careers that the participants followed were rationalised by them in their context at the time, given what was on offer. By the close of this longitudinal study they had achieved what they wanted, even when the finishing point was not the same as that first conceived. None of the participants had purposely acted counter to the system but had recognised when newly found avenues opened and accessed alternative routes that became open to them during the New Labour years, for instance through the Foundation degree route to the RTP. Notably, this also required a period of voluntary participation in the field. By 2012, when the RTP was withdrawn under the Coalition Government, and the £9000 University fees began, they had all completed their Foundation degrees and were saved by the optional continuation by universities to honour the old fees rate for continuing students to Honours degree level. Each participant recognised that their experiences were not necessarily going to be

accessible for their peers, or those in potentially similar positions by virtue of their socio-economic context. This confirmed data recognising widening participation strategies as mainly serving those already with some capacity to navigate and have social support systems in place (Smith, 2020; Thompson, 2019; Bowl et al, 2018; McCaig, 2018; Griffiths, 2017; Lindley and Machin, 2012).

There lingered a fractured learner identity from schooldays derived from the impact of under-achievement effecting learner security, but also evidence of self-belief and thirst for knowledge that could be attributed to both their personal dispositions and family influences. The characteristics of the participants' 'choices' on leaving school follow Adshead and Jamieson's (2008) descriptor of 'early adulthood' in unreflexive and non-decisive transitions. They were less influenced at this stage by the family than Adshead and Jamieson's study suggested might be the case at this stage, but decisions were indeed affected by their level of cultural capital and they, like their parents, later recognised education as a vehicle for career change and self-development. At the 'mature and mid-adulthood' stage (ibid), there were more reflexive responses. Career change decisions were affected by family life and a need for employment that fitted in with that, so it was not technically rational career decision-making in a traditional sense. They realised they had potential and sought personal development through a desire to learn, but also were restricted geographically as to where they could get to, so that they remained available for the school runs and childcare. Those without children in this study were younger, but still had caring and family responsibilities. However, each recognised the challenges that their peer students experienced. The 'choices' they had, whilst greater than their parents had experienced, still were curtailed by their childhood school experiences and their social, economic and cultural positioning in the fields they occupied. However, one important advantage was identified in negotiating the long transition to teacher status and that was the benefits of acclimatisation over time. Whilst they had all felt impatient at times throughout the process, they reported a strong sense of belonging to and crafts(wo)manship in their places of work as a result of having worked in school/educational contexts whilst they studied. The participants identified other new teachers on fast track teacher programmes, who were planning to, or had already left, the profession. These participants felt that because it was like a long-haul apprenticeship, they were now able to communicate and work with their teaching assistants effectively and knew the job 'inside out' themselves. In



professional terms, they have succeeded well where there was good leadership in the schools, and they recognised when and where to move when the context was not going to be supportive of their aim. They became increasingly attuned to the political and practical changes effecting school life. They recognised that their social support networks along with the attribute of self-efficacy and their economic context (whilst still challenging) enabled them to manage this route, and they recognised those with less capital in these areas would not. Josie spoke of how she was able to ride the crest of a wave of policy, hitting opportunity at the right time, where her colleague one year later, hit financial blocks when fees policy changed; their professional lives have become very different.

With individuals' lives becoming increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, levels of well-being, family units and so on, this may also have influence on the theories and methods we use to understand work lives. Perhaps with a keener focus on individual's internal attitudes and experiences over time it would show that we need to continually attend to current social and structural realities.

#### *Understanding structural gatekeeping*

This study concurs with Hodkinson & Sparkes (1997) in suggesting careers policy is often based on 'folk' theories that suppose that normative responses do not extend beyond the particular of privilege. This research evidenced a challenge to the popular meritocratic narrative represented in the form of 'those who try, can' and if you cannot, it is an individually owned deficit. Meritocracy is popular as a flag that offers hope, but from this study's viewpoint it is negatively charged, with gate keepers, particularly at policy level, awarding homophilic merit to those they recognise and assume are or should be 'like them'. An insight to how the eight participants in this study navigated their educational and career lives has brought insights that show the impact that long- and short-term policy has in aiding and hindering progress. The effects are unevenly experienced, dependent on the influence and timing of how policy directives occur and impact participants. A Bourdieuan underpinning to Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997) offered a theoretical insight to understand practice (Bourdieu, 1972; 1977) that identified the interconnected relationship of habitus and capital within a field. Bourdieu (2010) recognised that action within a field is competitive and that the field

changes over time, which this study was able to capture in the lives of these participants. The types of capital identified by Bourdieu are apparent in the study, for instance, in embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural forms, and the economic and social conditions within the changing fields that the participants inhabited. There is little evidence of serendipitous events that provided 'turning points', the picture is much more complex, rather circumstances alter over time and sometimes in circuitous ways that do not resemble the rational ideal that policy makers assume (Adshead and Jamieson, 2008). There was a combination of a number of positive influences within the educational field. Stimuli were almost entirely through the deputy or head teacher's support and advice for the participants, but entirely dependent on maintained support of those individuals and whilst policy remained in place to take its advantage.

#### *Time and timing*

It is recognised that it is not enough to just have individual accounts, but that narratives need putting in context (Goodson, 2005; Warren and Webb, 2007) and understood within documentary resources of the time in which it occurred. This study proposed a model to collect and analyse narratives that intersect within social and structural fields and demonstrated how these affected the participants differently as the socially constructed relationships changed over time. This was achieved by mapping their narratives and noticing how the change in fields across time influenced their positioning and thereby agency in the field. As Bourdieu would have recognised, those with stronger positioning within a field are likely to have greater positive influences and those in weaker positioning less likely to be able to navigate a similar path. For these participants, an alternative 'second chance' route was found into HE, which in a previous decade would not have been possible, yet access and success on the route can be seen to be much more challenging for those with less socio-economic and cultural capital on which to traverse this ever shifting terrain. These participants demonstrate how potential to participate meaningfully, whether in or out of education, has been and arguably still is screened out very early on for many.

This study also reveals complex transitions post-HE in family and work roles along with accepting temporarily low paid or short-term work contracts to fit with other gendered responsibilities and the job market. Over time, the participants realised the

higher-profile jobs they wanted, whilst evidencing that it required the necessity of prolonged negotiation and sustained tenacity in the process. The dimension of the time in which the action occurs was needed to understand possibilities (horizons for action) and to recognise social action, interaction and inequalities (Colley, 2007). The complex negotiations in accessing opportunities in these participants' career routes clearly showed how their navigation towards teacher status was dependent on many factors and atypical of a direct career 'trajectory' upon which corresponding policy is based.

The focus on time, relating to both historical and ongoing individual contexts, aids the discovery of the quiescent in regard to the influences of the social and political context of the participants' experiences *and* with how and when this occurs across their life course.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

This research contributes to three key areas:

- Knowledge on educational and career routes to teacher status by teaching assistants entering HE with non-standard qualifications (Empirical).
- The enhancement of Careership theory, through the use of graphical data collection and analysis (Theoretical)
- Understanding of the effects of structure, agency and culture over time (Conceptual).

### *Effectiveness and congruence of framework and research design*

Whilst the limitations of this type of methodology in terms of the potential for researcher inaccuracy in interpretation of the collected data, participants' self-measures of satisfaction and likelihood for congruence of the method to other contexts are acknowledged, but there remains flexibility for the researcher to tailor the foci according to their research and to have visible evidence of connections that may otherwise have been overlooked. Other limitations include the relatively small sample of the whole of the TA population, hence a broader perspective is possible with TAs who wanted to, but did not, become teachers and the experiences of male TAs. Continued access to participants in longitudinal studies becomes more complex and tenuous as time passes, so care with maintaining contact over the research

project is important. The timing of the study is entirely connected to the findings and whilst the methods could be replicated, the findings may differ with change of subject or context, including the timing of the research period. In many ways, this is a strength of this theoretical framework, since it is compatible to apply to changing contexts over time.

In reviewing and following Careership theory (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997), care should be taken to follow Hodkinson's 2008 review of the theory. When missed, it turns the researcher away from a concern with the Bourdieuan-based horizons for action to a focus on identifiable single events (turning points) that were subsequently rejected by Hodkinson (2008).

A theoretical contribution of this study is formed in the addition of two connected parts. Firstly, through the graphical data collection, as a mode of representation to give deeper insight to affective phenomena, and secondly, in the use of visual representation techniques in analysis that enabled identification of individuals' connections to broader socio-political contexts over time. The use of visual representation methods in data collection and analysis worked to confirm trustworthiness of connections between the narrative data, changing policy and evidence of socio-cultural re-positioning in the field. This method had potential to recognise influences, of which the participant and researcher may be unaware in discussion. I argue that this mode of analysis can make a contribution to research beyond the scope of this study. The development of graphic elicitation and visual representations may also be useful to other researchers not only in advancing Careership theory, but also in broader use in other applications and contexts. The recommendations I make, relating to the value of investing in new routes to teacher status across the life course, have resonance with other current work (Bovill et al, 2019; Smith, 2018) that supports mature learners' access to HE.

Non-traditional mature graduates such as those in this study are underrepresented and the need for quality routes to combine paid work with education could not only alleviate teacher recruitment but provide a sound mainstream route in revised formats.

Through the use of Careership theory, with extension to noticing the effect of time and timing, this longitudinal study has offered a detailed insight to the combined affect of structure, agency and socio-cultural influences across time on educational

and career routes to teacher status by TAs entering HE with non-standard qualifications. Concluding outcomes suggest that there is much unrecognised latent talent in the workforce and, concurrently, strong desire to contribute. However, access and participation of mature students in HE for careers in teaching needs to be well supported to establish routes and access opportunities that lower the economic risk threshold for entry to teaching and raise the reward for long term investment. It is evident from these narratives that social and familial support systems were crucial as was the recognition of their contribution in the field, which alongside established a sense of belonging. Persistence in their desire to contribute to society was central to their drive, but their tenacity and journeys were layered with complex effects of the social, political and affective domains that changed over time.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Example section of timeline of educational policy**





I am beginning my Doctoral research, which is based on the way female educators perceive that they balance and integrate their personal with professional lives during and after study in HE. I am interested in the careers of those who began HE study in learning support roles and have followed Foundation degree and then Honours degree study.

My central research question is:

What do mid-career women get from HE, and what additional factors play a part in their engagement and their career success or struggle?

I am therefore writing to you to see if you would be willing to be a participant in my study?

Here is a summary of what it would entail for you:

- Initial meeting to confirm and explain details of the research.  
(After this meeting, you may decide if you wish to continue. At any point you may decide to withdraw from the study).
- Granting me permission to study and analyse your Reflexive Study.
- Record a short reflection (3-5 mins audio or notes) prompted by questions to begin to focus on key areas of influence for you in your career and information about your profile.
- One-to-one interview (2 hours) at a location convenient to you.
- Follow up discussion (1 hour) to extend, develop or engage with ideas raised in the interview.
- One-to-one interview after one year (2 hours).
- Follow up discussion (1 hour) to extend, develop or engage with ideas raised in the interview.

If you think you may be willing to participate in this research, can you let me know? I can then give you more detailed information about the research rationale and process.

Many thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Wormald

Doctoral Supervisor: Prof. P. Sanderson

Second Supervisor: Dr J Dalton



## Participant information sheet

## Participant Information Sheet

*You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. You will have an opportunity to discuss this with me prior to the commencement of the research.*

What did higher education do for me? A critical life course study of mid-life female educators during and post undergraduate HE studies (working title)

*Purpose:*

This is research to be undertaken for my Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the University of Huddersfield to:

- Find out the perceived influences that undergraduate HE study has on career trajectories
- Record stories of ‘turning points’ in career trajectories in a particular period of time.
- Considers how the concept of time impacts on the stories of career trajectories?
- Determine key challenges and influences on career progression for teaching assistants in and post HE study.
- Determine ways in which HE study affects personal ontology.

More simply, what drew you to HE, and did you achieve what you wanted? What enabled you to engage in this study? What factors have influenced the direction, success or struggles in your career?

In this research, I want to explore the influences and experiences in your career development, through listening to your educational stories and descriptions of influences on your learning life. I, too, was a prior mid-career, female participant in undergraduate HE and I intend to incorporate a reflexive aspect to the research, in line with a life course narrative methodology. I intend to use the model of ‘Careership’ (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997, p.41), a sociological theory of decision-making, which notices dimensions of individual, cultural and political influences, as well as the unpredictable decisions that we make.

The findings from a critical perspective will not claim superiority but will explore aspects in specific relation to being a woman in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

You have been chosen as representative of a selective example of a mid-career woman, who began HE study in a learning support role and have followed Foundation Degree and then Honours Degree study.

*Here is a summary of what it would entail for you:*

- **Initial meeting to confirm and explain details of the research.**

(After this meeting, you may decide if you wish to continue. At any point you may decide to withdraw from the study).

- **Granting me permission to study and analyse your Reflexive Study.**
- **Record a short reflection (3-5 mins audio or notes) prompted by questions to begin to focus on key areas of influence for you in your career and information about your profile.**
- **One-to-one interview (2 hours) at a location convenient to you.**
- **Follow up discussion (1 hour) to extend, develop or engage with ideas raised in the interview.**
- **One-to-one interview after one year (2 hours).**
- **Follow up discussion (1 hour) to extend, develop or engage with ideas raised in the interview.**

Timescales:

Initial meeting -

Interview -

Follow-up discussion -

Interview -

Follow-up discussion -

.....  
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign and keep a consent form). If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without penalty, and without giving a reason.

All information collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information disseminated from the interview will have your real name removed. It is possible that this work will be used in future work for publication. The data collected will be kept securely and used in confidence. Data will be destroyed at the end of the project.

The proposal for this research has been approved by the University of Huddersfield (Feb. 2015), which included ethical considerations related to this type of study. *BERA guidelines will be adhered to at all times.*

Researcher contact: Jane Wormald

[j.wormald@hud.ac.uk](mailto:j.wormald@hud.ac.uk)

Doctoral Supervisor: Prof P Sanderson

Second Supervisor: Dr J Dalton

Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

Proposed research title:

What did higher education do for me? A critical life course study of mid-life female educators during and post undergraduate HE studies

Researcher: Jane Wormald BA DipHE MA FHEA  
Senior Lecturer University of Huddersfield

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Please initial box

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

Please initial box

- I understand that my responses will be anonymised.

Please initial box

- I agree to take part in the above project.

Please initial box

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

J. Wormald		
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Copies: One copy for the participant and one copy for the researcher.

*BERA guidelines will be adhered to at all times.*

### Profiles of participants

Below are narratives of the extraordinary women that I interviewed.

Pseudonyms: Katie, Jess, Josie, Anna, Amanda, Jasmine, Ronnie, Claudine.

#### Katie

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
TA	FdA			BA(Hons)		PGCE		Teacher

(7 years in HE).

Katie is from the Barnsley area and has lived there all her life. Her father was a steel worker at a large foundry and had the same job the whole of his career. He wished for more for his children and talked of his own missed opportunities in another, preferred trade. Both parents were emotionally and financially supportive of education. Her older sister was perceived as socially less confident and was described as 'academic'. Katie described her younger self as confident, describing how she was comfortable on 'familiar territory' in nursery/school transitions. She made friends easily so was unfazed by attending a school, following her sister, that was not local, but a bus-ride away. The school was described as being known as a 'good school'. Katie noted that her preferred subjects early on were PE, art and maths; literacy was always hard and remained so.

Mum was at home when Katie and her sister were young, did various part-time jobs when the children were at primary school and then later went into banking. More recently on being made redundant, mum has recently set up a highly successful business and Katie sometimes helps out at weekends and holidays. Grandad, a painter and decorator and later a councillor, was also a central figure in the education of the family. He tutored all his grandchildren in maths and German. Katie attributes her 'B' grade at GCSE to his involvement and placed pride on pleasing her Grandfather with this success.

At high school Katie was put on a 'Connexions' careers course, for those underachieving to give them confidence, which was perceived as 'very good' and gave her a boost. Significantly, Katie had a work placement from school at a primary school, which she loved and changed her previous career vision from working with animals to becoming a teacher.

Katie achieved nine A-C GCSEs. Later she was relieved to have achieved B in maths, C in English language (D for English literature) and C in science, this meant she did not have to re-sit any GCSEs for teaching later. She said she would not have re-sat at the time and probably would not have done them at a later date. In the PGCE key skills tests she got maths easily and re-sat then passed the literacy test, after help from her sister. There was no 6th form at school, so Katie went to college. Already she knew that she wanted to be a teacher. She chose a Childcare and Education CACHE diploma (level 3), which she 'really enjoyed' and which incorporated four days on placement with one day at college per week. This course gave practical 'insight into schools', introduced models of learning and the National Curriculum.

Following her parents' separation when she was 16, Katie lived with her father. She described herself as a 'home-bird' and wanted to be around for her father who was struggling emotionally.

On completion of her BTEC, the expectation from college was that she went to University, which she did, on a childhood studies course with QTS. Katie travelled from home to study each day, but lost faith in herself when her grades were not as good as she had expected and left after the first term. Her parents supported her decision, but in retrospect Katie feels she didn't know how to access the support she needed. However, she immediately got a job as a TA on supply and subsequently this job became permanent. The school, in special measures, set on seven TAs, through an agency funded by a government initiative. As a TA, she saw the panic of a classroom teacher, when being observed, and the corresponding changes in behaviours. Katie is so used to being observed now that it is not an issue:

'they are a key point in teaching, and I think that's why I never hated them ... I don't do anything different. I might make it a little bit fancier, but I wouldn't change dramatically, because I think the head teacher, or whoever is coming in, should see it how it is on a daily basis'. Her frustration of still being a TA showed when there was no power to change practice if the class teacher wanted to use a particular strategy/behaviour. This tension was highlighted when an NQT younger than her worked in the class and did things differently.

In 2008/9 at the age of 19 her sense of confidence was invigorated by an executive head teacher, who said, 'you need to become a teacher' and advised that she study part time on a Foundation degree. Katie funded this course herself (before the fee

rise) and received a grant, though she said she would have taken a loan if necessary, as she had become more confident and determined at this stage that she would succeed.

The Foundation degree encouraged theory to be connected with classroom practice in, for example, case studies or with implementing behaviour management strategies. Her Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HTLA) status had enabled her to work across key stages and year groups, understanding school habitus.

HE study enabled her to have confidence to try strategies that had underpinning theory and to be able to talk about it to explain its effect.

*'What I really enjoyed about Higher Education and it might not be to do with the education side of things, but being around people who are in the same profession and doing something similar, so sharing those ideas, sharing those experiences, discussing the, erm, elements of the assignments that you're doing with somebody else and being able to compare and look at the different strategies and then think about that in the classroom as well. It might not be something that I've done ... it might be what somebody else has done ... University allows you to share ideas with other students'.*

However, a new head teacher did not want to support the further two-year, in-service BA course. Since this was a top-up route, the lower fees would be held, but not if there was a break in studies. Katie had moved to her own rented accommodation by then and paid for the fees between 2012-14.

Katie began a full-time, unsalaried Schools Direct PGCE on a full loan on the higher fees 2014-15 and moved in with her mum temporarily until she could afford to move out again.

*'When I went for the interview for PGCE and I was like oh its fine if I don't get it, because if I'd not got onto that, I wouldn't have carried on, I wouldn't have put myself through it again, I would have just given up and just, yeah, unless I'd got offered another opportunity'.*

The new role was with the same EHT that had encouraged her previously. Katie completed the NQT year 2015-16 within an Academy Trust and has been employed in a year 2 post with ICT lead since September 2017.

Funding continues to be a barrier to professional development. Whilst peer discussion as professional development is valued, the possibilities of attending other training is limited. Much dissemination is done through one person attending training

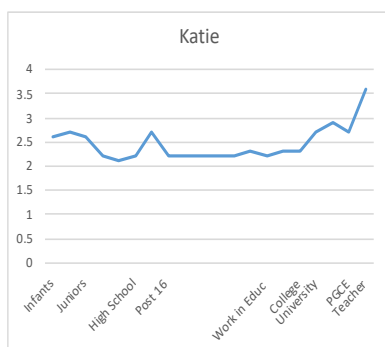
and disseminating it across the school. She referred to the 6-week Autism course she did as a TA with parents of a child in the class, which was greatly valued. Reflecting on her own attributes she refers to praise given to her as a child at school for her helpfulness and being kind to others in adversity. Katie now ensures that all parties know the reason why certain behaviours occur in particular circumstances, as it was not until understanding the issues that she was able to rationalise these experiences. Katie sees herself as a caring teacher:

*'I probably spend more time with the children as individuals, because TAs had the ability to do that, whereas teachers don't. So, I do find it important to make time for the children and make them feel like they can come to me, if they need to.'*

Katie is still most confident teaching maths and was praised in observations for her use of questioning and also for pace and differentiation. She recognises that her love of maths is infectious with the children and has seen attitudes to the subject change. She also recognises how the teacher effect is visible with subjects she is not as confident with, such as history. Katie would like to see herself in a maths or SENCO lead role.

At 2019:

Katie had just moved house and was on maternity leave with her first child. Her current job is Class Teacher with ICT lead.



Katie had less flux in the levels of the satisfaction lines than the other participants. A small fall in satisfaction in her earlier high school years is where she describes herself as an average student and 'floating along', but with the help of her grandfather with maths in the GCSE years, she became proud of her achievements. Another dip came post 16 after her parents separated and she started and then left a full-time University course, but she does not see these events as directly impacting on decisions she made, but rather part of the whole context.

## Jess

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
TA		FdA			BA(Hons)			Lecturer

(5 years in HE)

Jess' early education was on a UK island, where everyone knew each other and there was a lot of freedom for children. Jess had memories of spending summer on the beaches and walking to school with a friend at a very early age. Both parents were in nursing, hard-working and moved to northern England when Jess was 7. Jess' favourite subjects were English and drama, which she said pushed herself out of her comfort zone. She 'hated maths' and still does.

Jess left school after GCSEs in 1989 as her interest was now focused on socialising and earning money. Her parents encouraged her to stay on to do A-levels, but she felt she'd worked hard for her exams and hadn't enjoyed it. She mentioned her results in Drama A, Maths C and 'flunked French... bit of a waste really'.

Once she started earning in a shop job, she wanted to keep earning. She thought about a number of career routes, including speech therapy, but saw that it would be hard work and didn't want that at the time. She noted that she had never had an urge to follow any particular career path. With her mum's encouragement, she went to study at a local college to do beauty therapy in the September of 1989, starting a few weeks late. She soon found that it wasn't what she'd expected and left after 5 months. Jess didn't 'gel' with her course peers and she talked about the travel to college and work as being too long, and sometimes for only an hour-long class. This was particularly challenging in the winter months when there were several bus changes and she travelled alone in the dark. Twice she mentioned that she was shy. She recalls her mum being disappointed that she wasn't using her potential and wasting opportunities and it resulted in some tensions at the time.

Jess' shop job continued and a friend introduced her to a job in a dental surgery, but again, she didn't like this and left. She had no work for a few months then got a temporary seasonal job, worked hard and did extra shifts and secured a full-time job in the large retailers and stayed there for 4 years, during which time she learnt to drive making the commute easier, but expensive in relation to the pay.



During this time her parents divorced and she lived with her dad until he moved and then she moved in with her boyfriend (future husband) who had a house of his own. In 1995 she married and began to work nearer home at a clothes retailer for three days a week. She achieved some success in promotions and says she began to want to strive for something more. 'I didn't enjoy anything about the job at all and it just gave me a little bit of money'. Jess held this job whilst her children were small, as on her low wage they couldn't afford childcare. Her mother-in-law helped out and her husband was able to do some of the childcare because of working shifts. Jess had three children; very sadly, the middle child died at 18 months old.

A school newsletter advertised free courses for volunteers in schools, which drew her attention. 'They offered me an afternoon of voluntary work and I just loved it from the minute I went in'. She liked the environment and being part of the positive development of the children she worked with, mostly children with disabilities or behavioural challenges. The work was alongside a level 2 course that she felt might get her back on the career ladder now the children were at school. Her confidence grew with the feedback from her first essay suggesting she should work at level 3. Jess found this environment stimulating and also applied for a dinner-lady job, which was made possible by her mother picking the youngest up from nursery each day until she got home. At this point, in 2008, a TA job was advertised and the head teacher encouraged her to apply. She completed another level 3 SEN course 2009/10 and subsequently an NVQ. School noticed her potential and when an IT specialist wanted to cut her hours and then retired, they asked her to do the role, which included some teaching. The faith placed in her and the opportunity to develop her role inspired her. In 2010 she saw a flyer about a Foundation degree, which she decided to go for with encouragement from others at school and her husband. She realised that she enjoyed learning and bringing that back to the classroom.

Starting university was 'daunting' no one in her family had been. Her parents had trained as nurses, but this was before the degree entry for the profession. There was a trepidation about going back to study at her age (36) too. The expectation and plan on entry was to complete the Foundation degree followed by the teacher training (4 years' part time in total), which would take her to age of 40. The weekly sessions were 'inspiring' and she went back to school to implement new ideas. There was a limit to what could be changed because of trepidation about internal politics. She felt as if she was being kept away from the main curriculum in her role and didn't dare

push herself forward. However, she did find she could make small but effective changes that the teachers noted.

University study highlighted a mismatch between theory and the practice she saw in school and this was disorientating. She compared others' experiences with her own and wondered why they weren't doing the same in her school. The school was regarded as outstanding by Ofsted, 'but we weren't'. School contributed to her fees so there was a loyalty to the school and she decided to bide her time.

Then the rules changed: all teacher trainees had to have Honours degrees with 2:1 or first awards. This meant another two years, part time study on a BA(Hons) course. Her critical thinking was developing a pace and she was enjoying learning and engagement in study. She got good feed-back and this made her feel determined to do the best she could.

*'I think it was self-belief after all that time of just working in a shop and not really using my brain and not doing anything worthwhile. So it just completely opened my mind to lots of different things and I think I'd lived quite a narrowed minded and sheltered existence.'*

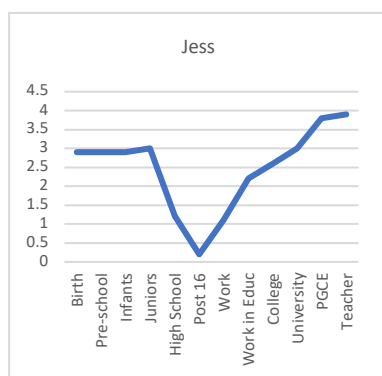
She recognised how she had taken on the beliefs her family and her husband promoted, without question, and gave a specific example of how she used to feel about some of the unemployed parents of children. By studying the challenges that people face, political ideologies and its impact on achievement it gave her a new perspective, saying 'I'd never thought of those things before'. She says she now challenges things she would never have done before.

This led to another disorientation as she recognised the hoop-jumping and tick-boxing distracted from what the children actually needed and that she was implicit in that system. In addition, the workload was already impinging on family time and she saw colleagues working all hours to complete the marking and paperwork, 'whatever you do is not good enough for the government'. She reported that lots of peers in primary teaching never have any time, are under a lot of pressure and stress and would not choose to go the same route in retrospect. Having achieved a first-class degree, she felt she could do more. She attended all the training courses she could and felt like she could hold her own in these contexts. Her confidence grew from her experiences on her undergraduate course, such as a presentation of her research at a student conference and a University prize. Jess was determined and confident about the future. To start a PGCE would mean re-taking science GCSE, which she

had been unable to achieve. She felt she had been at this stage too long and needed something more. A job in educational related work would be of interest, but she hadn't fully decided.

At 2019:

Jess branched out from primary into HE and began work at a redbrick University in post-graduate assessment. She decided not to pursue teaching as 'it was just awful watching the pressure our teaching staff were under' and felt she had reached as far as she could within the remit of her support role. She reported that she was working so many hours of her own time, evenings and weekends that she decided to re-assess priorities. Jess left the school she'd been at for 10 years and took a student support role for an online section of a southern UK University for a year and then applied for her current position of Student Education Services Officer (Assessment). Satisfaction line.



Jess' self-measured satisfaction line showed commonality with most of the participants in a distinct drop during high school and post 16 education. She uses her satisfaction line to refer directly to her attitude to learning and study, so it does not reflect the concurrent personal challenges for their family during some of this time.

### Josie

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
TA	FDA			BA(Hons)				PGCE	Teacher

(8 years in HE)

Josie was born 1974, her mother was a hairdresser; her father, a site manager in construction. She has one brother who did not go to university. Josie began school in a playgroup attached to the school. Her mother took her and she remembers a lot of

play, 'Half the day, we seemed to spend playing, for at least the first two years.'

Primary schooling was in a small ex-mining town. Josie described herself as quiet at Infant School, feeling on the periphery. At Middle school she became involved in athletics, rounders and netball and was encouraged by the sports teacher 'he sort-of took me under his wing'. It was here that she also emerged as academic, so felt a sense of confidence. 1987 was the beginning of high school, which was interrupted early on by an operation that she described as 'knocking her sideways' and said she no longer saw herself as successful 'I lost my way a little bit'. Josie became pregnant and was asked to leave school before GCSEs in 1990. At the time she thought they were being kind by not wanting to stress her, 'looking back, with more experience, they just wanted to get rid of me'. It was a mixed time in terms of life satisfaction. However, a maths teacher who had seen her potential earlier in high school years gained permission to speak to her parents at home to offer tutoring for maths and he organised a colleague for English tuition for GCSEs. Josie successfully took her maths & English GCSE at re-sits in the November. The English was by course work, maths required attending an exam at school. These were taken at foundation level and she achieved the maximum of two Cs. With those completed, she began part-time work locally as a pharmacy assistant. She continued to work there as she got married and had a second child at the age of 22. When her son was 4 she started to help at school and immediately took to it. A nursery assistant course came up, held in a nearby village so in 2000 Josie applied for the CACHE course and then followed a government-initiated course 'Helping in Schools' targeted at parents supporting their children in school. The school asked if she would join to encourage other parents to take part. She kept up the volunteering and in 2005 was encouraged to apply for a TA job at the same school working in year 2, after having applied unsuccessfully for local nursery roles. This role was a general classroom assistant and the next year she was in year 3, one-to-one, with a child with speech and learning difficulties. From a classroom observation, the Deputy Head encouraged Josie to aim further, found a Foundation Degree course and showed it to her. In interview Josie consistently recognised the people who had belief in her and this is a strong feature in her narrative. She was fascinated by her own children's growth at school and the more time she spent in school, the more it felt right. It was 'just liking being part of that and what it stood for and having that enthusiasm for wanting to do something like that'.

Josie began the four-year part-time FdA in 2006. She noted others' faith in her, loved being with the children and though she had inner ambition and ability and saying 'you know what, I can do more than this', she still lacked confidence and recalls that she couldn't grasp how she got from school leaver to attending university. She worked as TA across all year groups in the years she studied at university. Even on the course it was hard to see possibilities of a next step because of lack of confidence. Josie recalls never committing to anything in case it didn't work out as she would see that as failure. So, she described what she called 'ride the wave' and continued study to top up the FD to an Honours degree. She does refer to the possibility that she 'could have fallen' during another two years of study.

Speaking on opportunities, she recognises that she would not have been able to study full-time in HE and more particularly as a single parent. At that time there was no funding for part-time students, though she did apply for a grant, which covered some of it. She was thankful that she was able to complete her degree on the old fees system. Whilst completing the final year Josie also took GSCE Science, a prerequisite for teaching qualifications in primary education. Once this was achieved, she committed to teaching. School supported her through a Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). Josie worked full-time, was given a mentor and one day per week training (SCITT programme) for a year. In the five years since then, Josie has mentored two others on SCITT programmes, but 2017 was the last year they were being offered in that area. However, it did put her in a good position as a mentor to guide others to avoid pitfalls.

All of this work was in the same school. At the time of the first interview Josie was about to move job for the first time, as her partner's work moved to another city and she felt she was ready for change. She had loved her previous job, but felt she'd outgrown it. There was no indication of Deputy Head or other senior roles changing. Her new role was the first job she applied for and she felt it was just right for her. She works as an Academy Teaching Specialist, raising standards in maths across the Trust. This includes mentoring and 20 days per year in classroom-based work. Josie reflected on her career route, which had certainly required determination, but where she also had experience at all job levels and across all year groups in primary education, including being the student teacher, an NQT, a mentee and mentor.

At the time of the first interview, Josie was considering the possibility of aiming for Headship and certainly Deputy Head role, but was also excited about the CPD opportunities within the Trust.

Josie spoke fluently about what she had benefited from through participating in HE. She is confident about how to put an argument together, how to reference and substantiate work, how to do research ... she recalls loving research and misses reading. Through her own experience with children and interest in education, Josie focussed her final study on child-initiated play and learning. She recalled how she still refers to it in her more activity-based practice, in comparison to the typically more stationary classrooms as children get older.

Her parents are proud of her and she encourages her own children in education, contrasting her attitude to that of the community in which she was brought up. She talks of lost industries and change of expectations for families when the mining closed and of changing mind-sets. Josie wishes that High Schools would make people more aware of career opportunities but recognises the challenges too.

'Families that are on low income, which is quite a lot, a lot of the families in [her home town] and a lot of families of the children that I teach, they're working, which means they can't get any other help with support, they're just on that [gesture = brink]... So for them, it is difficult and I do think it has had an impact.'

Josie refers to one of her mentees in teacher training who had to stop. He had a degree in psychology, but childcare responsibilities meant he couldn't work the hours necessary. His partner was the main bread winner and his career had to be postponed. Josie talks of the constant battle with juggling study, children and work and how much time you do/don't spend with the children.

Josie reflects on how others respected what she had achieved and modelled themselves on her by going into teaching. Reflecting on a friend who did the same degree but left before finishing, she reports that she is still in a TA job, though she is happy with that.

At 2019: Josie was not contactable at 2019 having moved house and job.

Josie aligned her ups and downs in satisfaction with feelings of confidence and success. Middle school brought bundles of self-esteem, she was good at sport, arty, academic and put on a pedestal. This was knocked severely first by an illness and

later by attitudes to her having a baby at 16, 'all the fingers pointing at you ... self-esteem just goes' and it took until getting to University to reclaim some confidence and belief that she could do it. Other's belief in her abilities at work were significant in her progress.

### Anna

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
TA							FdA			BA(Hons)		PGCE

Anna's family emigrated to New Zealand when she was 3 or 4 years old, though they returned soon after. Her father was an engineer and mum had a number of different part-time jobs over the years, working in the library, as a dinner lady, in office work. At Junior school there was one memorable teacher. Other memories were less pleasant, a teacher who blocked the windows, lined children up and only let them home if they answered a question correctly and when older children added salt to the dinners. When the family moved to another part of town Anna started another middle school in a different area. She is still in contact with some of the friends she made there. The high school went through three changes whilst Anna was there from comprehensive to specialist school to high school. The ethos of the school was described through its uniform, which ranged from strictly coded to much more relaxed. Here, she remembered a history teacher who inspired her with his love of his subject. College followed, where she took A levels, 'which I failed miserably'. She had taken Economics, as she was ill-advised that it was bank-related subject, and history. She contrasts the study approach with the more autonomous learning at degree level, where 'you are in charge of your own learning, but don't have to remember everything by rote.' She left college with shorthand and typing and had re-taken a couple of O-levels. There was no thought of university and her parents did not 'push her'. 'Because I didn't get my A-Levels, it wasn't like that was accessible anyway, but it wasn't something... like I said...my mum and dad hadn't been to Uni.' She reflects on the fact that it wasn't what her and her friends in her area even considered.

Anna talked about her flippant choices: 'when I was at school, we had, erm, like careers lessons, where they told you about things and, and I just went yeah, that

sounds a nice job.' She liked the thought of a building society, rather than a bank, as her impression was that it was more relaxed, though in reality there was no such distinction. Anna started a job in the bank in 1987, worked there 7 years until the birth of her daughters in 1995 and 1997. Anna took an agreed 3 years career break and asked to go back part-time, but that wasn't possible. Hints of her values and temperament came through in her dislike of the 'sell, sell, sell' approach at work, which she didn't want to be part of. To add to income, Anna began childminding in 1998-2002 following a childminding course, 'so that I could just get a little bit of money coming in, erm, you know, to pay for holidays and extra niceties and things.' Once her children had moved on to school she started to volunteer in school. Volunteering led to a lunchtime supervisor role looking after a child with behavioural issues and led to a request from the head teacher to do temporary classroom support for SEN too. The TA role lasted for thirteen years. Anna supported children one-to-one, with Dyspraxia, Autism, Downs Syndrome from reception to year 6. About eight years into this role, Anna was involved in a Teachers' International Professional Development (TIPD) project, which involved an international exchange visit for ten days; three of the school staff went. An informal discussion on this trip led to Anna considering a career in education, by being prompted to think about 'wanting more'. She was also prompted on the retirement of a colleague to imagine herself at that age and what she could achieve. In 2009, Anna began the FDA degree. Anna said it fit in well with her children as they didn't need attention all evening now. The top up to a BA followed. Anna got some financial support from school (one module per year) and paid the rest herself, though she explains this was on the lower fee rate. Then came a decision to give up her job to do teacher training. She enrolled on a SCITT programme with the PGCE and began at another school. For her it was made possible due to her husband's job being sufficient to sustain a drop in income. They had just finished paying their mortgage and so was an opportune time. The fees for the SCITT year were taken by student loan and Anna is now repaying from source.

She was selected by the head teacher of a very small primary school (47 pupils) from one of the largest primary schools (360 pupils) in the district. The other placement schools showed contrasts in terms of social deprivation (a small school) and the other 'bursting with resources', and a third school with 99% British Asian children.



Anna's first teaching post in Reception (2015) was with another school in the area, as a maternity cover, then as a one-year contract. She had been there for two years at the time of the first interview. The job became challenging due to a co-teacher who became unpleasant. Fellow teachers were aware of this happening with others too, but management didn't see it. This prompted a move to her current school again covering a maternity leave. This role was across two sites. One with year 3 and the other with year 1. At each place Anna expressed her love of the children. Her ideal would have been working in Reception, but there was nothing available at that point. Her passion for the 'EOS' approach connects to her values and temperament. Years 1&2 and 3&4 work closely together. The year 3/4 team won a regional award in 2017 for 'Class of the Year'...'it engages the children, you have to have an outcome at the end of it, a realistic outcome, which leaves a legacy.'

Just before the end of the maternity cover, a permanent year 6 job became available, which Anna applied for (even though it wouldn't have been her first-choice year group) and started in September 2017. She feels valued by the school and staff. Her work colleagues think she should relax more, but she says she studies/works to a certain time in the evening and then stops.

She makes reference to her being older than most at this stage in her teaching career, but that it isn't problematic. In fact, she refers to it as the right time in life for her. On beginning the FD she had thought that she wished she'd done it a lot earlier, but it has meant that she could focus on her children whilst young.

Anna said she learnt a lot from her auntie, a teacher who worked in London. Her car was full of books and marking and she travelled a lot. She exclaimed that investigating new places, finding out new things and passing them on... 'I just love it!' She is excited about the new ethos of learning environments and project-based learning. I recognised from the first interview that Anna linked teamwork and collaboration with peers to her satisfaction levels.

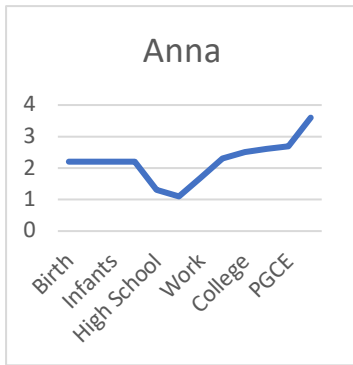
Anna acknowledged the impact that entering HE had on her: 'It opened a big door and gave me the opportunity to go into teaching, erm. Because I then had that piece of paper, which enabled me to, to go down the route of teaching.' Anna recognised the tension between the requirement for a teaching qualification and that policy change had enabled Academies to appoint without these qualifications. She still recognises the power of the 'piece of paper' and that she wouldn't have contemplated doing it by a different route. The theory connecting to practice in the

degree level work has been the foundation for her to develop areas such as behaviour management and SEN, as have the training courses from work. HE experiences enabled her to express herself effectively. She puts this down to her previous self-image that did not see herself as a candidate for HE level study, 'I still had those misgivings that I can't get a Degree, I didn't get my A-Levels, you need A-Levels to get a Degree, I've not got enough to get a Degree'. However, the style of learning was more suited to her. Rather than a read, recall, repeat method that she did not excel in, she read around a topic and took time to formulate an argument and wrote. The realisation that she could achieve well this way, brought back some confidence. This experience is reflected in her approaches in school and awareness of children's diverse learning experiences. She encourages many ways of gathering and recording information and emphasises the value of team and active working. Asked about her transition from TA to teacher, Anna first talks about the benefits of 'ownership' over what is happening in the classroom as being important. She has built relationships with TAs with the benefits of the challenges she has previously experienced. Anna recognises the need to plan and work effectively with TAs. She reflected on her TA experiences of having no prior knowledge of what was going to happen in the classroom and therefore being poorly prepared. Anna considers the role of the TA as having as much effect as the teacher in the classroom because they are working directly and closely with the children. The TAs should know what the purpose and aims of the session are to be of most benefit - not be learning alongside.

Anna is unsure about the future of education because of its politically directed and transient nature, 'a lot of what we do in School is that there are set, set ways of doing things ... but in twelve months' time, that might all change and the Government might say right, you have to, to do this, this and this...'

At 2019:

Anna is a class teacher in year 3 at a newly formed Academy.  
'...all the small steps that I've done...have obviously been aiming towards, towards one thing, and I've got there'.



Anna had few early memories of school, hence a flat track until school in England. With very few positive memories and little expectation or information of what might come next, school was tolerated. It was once Anna was able to enjoy the educational environment as a contributor that she slowly began to develop confidence in her capabilities.

### Amanda

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
					BA(Hons) +			
TA		FDA			TA		PGCE	Teacher

(6 years in HE)

Amanda's mother gave up training to be a teacher when she became pregnant with Amanda. Her father was described by Amanda as working-class and from German/Russian parentage and didn't speak English when he first went to school. They lived next to a large council estate and her mum organised for Amanda to go to a 'very good' school two miles away in an affluent area. Even at that age she was 'the odd one out', 'people didn't want to be my friend'. There was an uneasy relationship with the teachers too. In year 1 of junior school she was smacked by the teacher. 'Miss [X], told my mum and dad that no matter how hard I tried, I wouldn't pass my Eleven Plus'. However, in year 4, Amanda had a form teacher who lived nearby take her under her wing and she passed the 11 +. She described herself at that time as somewhat of a rebel. Amanda didn't know anyone in her class at high school 'but again, a girl took me under her wing and I'm best friends with her still.' Amanda's memories were about socialising 'I don't remember much about studying. I remember just having a really good time, with my friends, not studying, erm, you know, we used to get up to all sorts, actually.'

At the age of 13 (1985) Amanda's mum had a breakdown and Amanda reported that she didn't really go to school for a year. Just prior to that her parents split up and

Amanda left home because she fell out with her younger brother. She reports being 'out of control' and went to live with her now life-long friend and their family until her father contacted her and she went to live with him. When she decided she needed to do something with her life, school told her it was too late as she'd missed so much, and it was likely that she wouldn't get her GCSEs. A chance meeting with her aunt (a teacher) and uncle (a head teacher) instigated an offer to help her with GCSE study. Her aunt tutored her in English language and literature and her uncle in Maths - Amanda achieved three grade Cs in these subjects. Amanda said she'd wanted to stay on at school, but her father thought she 'was taking the proverbial'. Once again family connections worked in her favour as her uncle was friends with her form tutor (they were both union representatives). The tutor suggested to Amanda's father an alternative CPVE (Certificate in pre-vocational education) route, still through the school. Amanda said she remembers little other than doing interviews and curriculum vitae. However, half of the time was on placement in an insurance company and following the course, at 17 (1989), Amanda started work there, full-time. It is here she met her husband and married (1997). She worked for two insurance companies before having her first child (1998) and had the second two years later. Amanda returned to work three nights stacking shelves at a local shop for two years, which she hated and began going to night school with a friend, which included getting a GCSE in Psychology (B). Amanda did a lot of cash-in-hand jobs as well, for example, cleaning (for a trainee teacher) and some voluntary work at the school (2 days/week) where her eldest was and part-time work at Pre-school with the youngest (3 days/week). In 2004, with both sons at school, Amanda finished the part-time work and applied for an NVQ and CACHE Diploma course in 'Childcare in education' course at college and got a paid part-time TA job each morning at a school. She had three offers for a TA role. One offer was for 6 hours and they said she could volunteer for 6 more. The course required a minimum of 12 hours work per week. Amanda is candid about how she may have got the role, her neighbour (who she cleaned for and was her referee) was friends with the head teacher. Overlapping with this, she followed a friend to do a dyslexia certificate, which was another evening class. She attributes her ability to do this with her husband and the fact he did some work from home and was able to do some of the childcare. Amanda studied at home in the mornings at weekends, whilst her husband looked after the

children, 'I wanted to study because I'd had enough of being with the kids all week, is that really bad?'

A prompt from her mother nudged Amanda to think about progressing her study and it was her mum (who had now finished her qualification) that gave her a leaflet about a Foundation degree and said 'it was a stepping stone to being a teacher ... and you could do this'. Her uncle also encouraged her to go that route, he said 'you'd be a brilliant teacher and I was like don't be so ridiculous'. Amanda recognised the lack of belief in herself coming from what she had been told at school. She recalls her mother's side of the family all being 'academic'.

Amanda began the part-time FdA in 2006, During this time Amanda also got her GCSE Biology (B) and worked at a local college as a dyslexia tutor (36hrs/week). The workload became a lot. Sundays, she studied 7am to 12pm so there was time left in the day. 'I do feel that, I think, like how much work do you put in, it just never stops... the list is never ending, isn't it? You never get to the bottom of it.'

Amanda enjoyed the social side of the FdA degree and still is friends with those she met there. She still didn't have much confidence in writing, but the sessions allowed a lot of confidential discussion of practice to happen and to learn what was happening elsewhere. Her memories were that it was enjoyable, but she had less recall on specific learning, though felt she had a good grounding in areas such as child psychology and enjoyed researching new things.

She then progressed to the part-time BA in 2009, completing in 2011 (2:1). The final course, the PGCE, was at another University. It was an easier commute and was where her mother had done her teacher training.

Amanda began work at a large primary school where she had been for the past 5 years teaching in years 3&4.

'I needed a challenge... My first year, I was like rabbit in headlights, my second year, I was a bit like oh this is getting better and the third year I was like this is brilliant... [then] I was a bit like I need a change, you do start to get quite blasé. I found that I wasn't sort of as excited, you know, and you need that, don't you? So, I've gone to Year Two. I want the challenge'.

Amanda reported that in her class of 27, she has 10 children with severe SEN including 4 boys and 1 girl who are 'severely autistic'. However, Amanda says she loves it. The school is in a deprived area and has a number of problems associated. Amanda says she is still not good at observations, becoming very self-conscious and

pressured and has suffered for this when being observed to the point of being put on an 'improve to teach' course. However, recently she had also been on an 'outstanding teacher programme', confirming her progress. She became subject lead in Geography, having outdoors experience, and willingly dropped the RE lead 'because I find RE horrendous'. Amanda is a mentor for PGCE students on training/placement. She would like to become a team leader but notes that there are a lot of staff with a lot of experience so it may be difficult. Her husband had encouraged her to find another role in order to progress, but she is currently happy there. Their two sons are now growing up and they are thinking to the future. Both sons plan to go to university. Amanda is generally happy with work but dips a bit from time to time. She sees teaching as a dedication and lifestyle. She reports often being 'shattered', but that she earns a decent wage.

'I earn reasonable money for what I do, because you know, I used to be a cleaner and you know what I mean, and load shelves in the bloody [name of grocery shop], for six pound an hour or whatever it was, do you know what I mean?... So I like to be optimistic, but I do think, sometimes I think ...'.

Whilst her husband has always earned the main income from the same firm, there has been intermittent redundancy threats at work. Her husband is 10 years older than her and at some point, possibly at 65, will retire, but she sees herself working until 67, but part-time and 3 days a week when she's 55 'because that's what they do up near me'. Amanda was, at this time, 45 years old. She qualified at age 40 and at the time thought 25 years ahead sounded fine 'I was quite excited about it...But I'm already five years in, thinking another ten years, I don't know.' She is not keen on the managerial side, 'not bothered, not bothered, don't want the workload'. She has expressed that to the HT too. She feels she is growing through her creativity in the classroom, which she says comes naturally and recognises that others find it more difficult. Amanda thinks that her studies in HE underpins everything she does with the children and she feels confident in that. Amanda feels that she is good communicating with children and setting expectations of good behaviour. She gives an example of one particularly challenging boy, who completely turned around in her class, yet has retreated to old behaviours in his next class. Explaining why it matters to her, she says, 'Mmm, I like an underdog as well, me, I always felt I was the

underdog, so I will always support an underdog, always. I won't tell the children; I won't say that to them... I just think, you know, that I'm doing something'.

The area that the school serves has very high unemployment and she worries for the future of some of the children. She recalls having been asked at interview about what she thought of the area and saying it reminded her of where she grew up.

Amanda also recalled uncomfortably that one of her good friends at Grammar school was told by her mother not to be friends with her because of where she lived.

Amanda recalled that it almost made her hate the place. Amanda explained that this has had an effect on her attitude to teaching even though her life now is different.

Amanda likes a tight-knit community, 'I love the range of people that I work with, the teaching assistants, again, very eclectic, the teachers, all very different and I love that and we all get on really well'.

This is very different to her college working experience where staff shouted at each other and had a lax attitude to monitoring, 'you could have just got away with murder' but on balance it paid well, she did enjoy her role and they wanted her to stay.

She was set on becoming a primary school teacher, despite it being tough taking a year with no pay during training. She

acknowledged that she could not have done it without her husband and that her in-laws paid her fees. Her in-laws had both had very successful careers and her

husband's grandmother (at 99 years old) had wanted to be a teacher and they were keen to encourage Amanda and even travelled a distance to do childcare. Amanda

describes her husband's family as upper-class, sending their children to private school. She recognises the power of connections. An example given being at an

interview for her current job where the head teacher's child was in one of her previous classes when she was on placement.

Amanda talked of the frustration of changing policy during her long route to become a teacher. When she first started, primary trainees didn't have to have a science

GCSE. Amanda also had to re-sit the IT test for the PGCE a number of times, as a requirement of the qualification. The numerous re-sits are no longer possible and

Amanda says she would be in a difficult position now.

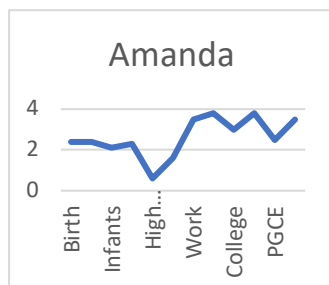
Reflecting on her role as a parent, she says she's a real helicopter parent. Having been let down by education as a child, she pushed for her son to go to a private

school on a scholarship. Her second son wasn't going to go, but she thought the friends he was with were not supportive and they decided to send him too. They

were pleased until A level grades with the school with the older son. He failed his A levels, but has subsequently gone to University locally.

At 2019: Amanda did not respond to contact at this point.

Satisfaction line:



### Jasmine

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
TA	FDA			BA(Hons)		PGCE	Teacher

(6 years in HE)

One of Jasmine's earliest memories (1985) is Grandma taking her to nursery kicking and screaming. However, she soon became to love it, recalling doing a lot of reading and playing outside with friends. Jasmine met friends recently and they recalled how at primary school there were sitting rules, the nearer the teacher, the more 'able'. Her friend remembers her somewhere in the middle. Jasmine's favourite subjects were reading and arts and crafts. At secondary school Jasmine began to enjoy science 'because it was more structured' and again liked school. Jasmine took 10 GCSEs, she opted out of languages finding them difficult, but was encouraged to take Urdu at the last minute, as her mum had taught her to read and write in Urdu. Urdu was spoken at home but there was no additional support for the GCSE exam. Progression to A-levels meant a change of school and Jasmine went to a grammar school sixth form but didn't like it there and decided then that she did not want to go to university. It was a teacher, rather than the subjects that put her off. One teacher identified Jasmine's English, as a second language, to be a challenge. She recognises now that feedback was minimal and didn't support her moving forward, 'I remember quite clearly a discussion with the teacher. They said, you can spend all



night working on that assignment and X will do it – hypothetically speaking – and she'll get it right, but you'll struggle because English is your additional language'. Jasmine also recalls never getting feedback, just a grade of 15/20, the same mark all year. She did, however, achieve three grade Bs at A-level.

She identifies herself as being 'no better or worse than others' but didn't see that at the time and whilst she applied to the local university on the hopes of her parents, she withdrew the application at the last minute. She felt she really didn't know what she wanted to do, but also, in retrospect, she thinks she was worried about failing and that she had difficulty when things went wrong. She says she now has the maturity to deal with this, but at the time leaving education solved the problem. She did have some careers guidance at school and felt there were things out there, but didn't know what she was interested in. She felt a definite door close on education. Jasmine began working for an insurance company and enjoyed earning money. She went from one job to another (between ages 18-26), but increasingly not feeling totally satisfied. Jasmine married in 2005, she does not have children.

A specific discussion with her siblings set her on a new course. She had estimated that she earned more than they would on leaving University, to which they responded, that yes, initially, but she had no transferability to another job. From advice from a friend about alternative routes to teaching, she left to volunteer in the local school for about a year (where she had attended as a child). This was part-time and fitted well with home life. Jasmine wanted to make a difference to children who needed to be listened to and applied to do the FdA degree and for a TA post in 2010. At interview the head teacher suggested that she aimed to be a teacher and has been very supportive, even providing a Schools Direct place in school for her training. Jasmine's siblings are younger than her and both studied at university after attending grammar schools.

Her father came to the UK with his parents at the age of ten. Her mother was a housewife. Jasmine was aware of the language barriers for her parents saying, 'they understood the struggle of finding work and being able to participate in society because it is hard because language barriers can create so many other barriers for you as you progress through life and so they were very keen and they were really upset when I refused to go to university to the point where they said, ...well what are you going to do with your life?'

Her original ambition on completing the FdA was to conclude it with a RTP. At interview Jasmine was completing the Schools Direct and PGCE route 'it's been a long-winded process I suppose'.

Jasmine reflected upon not knowing what she was doing, or why, in the classroom when she started the FdA degree, she just followed the teacher. She noted that teachers are not always right, and she feels she has become more 'ethical' in what she does.

I think you've got to go into education or teaching genuinely wanting to help children. If it's just a job, then you are doing the children a disservice because you are preparing them for their future roles and if you are not going to support them then how are they going to go through life.

During the FdA degree 'the penny dropped':

'I began to understand things better; I started to reflect on my teaching practice and I just didn't take things for granted. I was beginning to think 'why am I doing this and what purpose does it serve?' ... so there was a whole host of modules that we did and each one of them gave me a better understanding of my practice and it helped me understand my role within the classroom. And it empowered me because I understood what I was doing and that makes a huge difference. It was no longer actions; it had a purpose. And that's when I started to understand a lot more about education.'

Crucially, feedback on assignments was useful,

'It scaffolded my learning and that's when I really realised that I could do it because the feedback that I was given helped me to move forward.'

Jasmine understands that children need feedback that is accessible and also praises their attempts verbally because some struggle to read the written feedback. Her maturity showed through her reflection on understanding that the feeling of being 'unsettled' in different contexts was ok and was part of learning and this along with the theoretical understanding was good foundation for the practical work. Jasmine compares this as a great advantage to others on the PGCE, who have completed a particular subject as a first degree and gone straight into teaching.

Regardless, it has been a challenge:

'... It's been challenging. Others have thought I've managed it well but studying part time and working full-time is difficult'.

Her husband, who is a mechanic, has said that he is getting fed up with it after 5 years and would like to spend some Sundays together. Jasmine says this is impossible because of the volume of planning and assignments on top of not being able to cope if she feels she's falling behind, and it is a problem. She is near completion of her studies but also worries that the time factor does not stop there. On entering the FdA she didn't really think of the study implications, but now thinks she just needs to 'keep going'. Already she is contemplating more study. On the future, she says, 'my heart says carry on and my mind says stop'. She says she has a 'thirst' and 'drive' to carry on and see how far she can go. For six years she studied (age 29-35) and it became how she lives, but there's a cost to family life and there was still no guarantee that she will get a post at the school where she has trained. Jasmine was clear that she deeply cares for the welfare and opportunities for the children in her charge and her mentor confirms her rapport with the children, even when on occasion the teaching element needs some work. The mentor is supportive in saying that those skills can be developed, but the ability to connect with the children is much harder. Jasmine's response shows her entrenched values are important to her way of life. She reflects on the many changes in school and the curriculum and has an awareness of the impact of policy change:

'you know for a fact that nothing is constant or that things will stay the same and you've got to move along, and you've got to upskill yourself really quickly and accept things the way they are and carry on going. You have to follow the policy in practice and, within schools, to follow their policy and their practice.'

She realises that the 'deal' where she began her journey altered substantially yet does feel thankful that she was able to do much of it on the old fees scheme (as she began in 2010, before the 2012 fees hike). She adds that the school are also paying some of the School Direct training costs too. She compares her HE financial debts with her siblings (Pharmacist and Optician) who have substantial loans to repay, both of whom studied full-time.

Her parents are proud, 'they think I've done really well considering I've studied while working full-time. My mum and dad are proud that I've persevered. They didn't think I would get passed the foundation degree.' They were worried about her sustaining the study when policy and routes to teaching kept changing; she describes the routes as 'disappearing' in front of her.

Asked about her long-term career she says, 'I probably will stay because I've given up six years of my life to do this and I enjoy it. Ten or twenty years on, when I am retiring, I will be retiring from teaching.' She sees lots of possibilities but does not want to go along the head teacher path because of the 'pressure and pitfalls'. The time-demands play a large part in the challenges and sacrifices in this career path for Jasmine,

'I'd like to think that one day I'll find a balance between work and home life and have some time for myself as well...It is because you can give up a weekend and not see my friends or family and that is alright but when it's every weekend and it's for a very long time you get to the point where you think that you don't really have a life anymore... they got used to it because that's how it is. What I say to my mum now is that it's not long and I'm nearly there. But it's just little things like going shopping together or mum wants me to come over for tea and things like that.'

Jasmine decided to return to education after finding there was a ceiling to promotion opportunities, she found that whatever you thought, that qualifications did hold value. She felt she had potential, 'I knew I could do a lot more... I did it to prove to myself that I could do it.'

Jasmine is articulate at talking about her practice giving examples of the decisions made when intervening in supporting children, 'the reward is putting a smile on your face and that of the children'.

Family support is paramount, 'even in that decision not to go to university and although my parents were not happy with it they supported me and whatever I've chosen to do I've had that family support and it's helped me along the way whether it's my husband or my siblings or mum and dad. They've always been there for me even when I've wanted to do things that they weren't happy with.'

Jasmine now works in the same school she started at and attended as a child,

'I've come full circle... I was interested in how children developed their mark making and how it changed over time. But I didn't know then that I might come back to it later. When I see work now it makes me smile a lot when I see all these arms coming out of heads and legs here and there but that's how children develop, and it fascinates me and I still get excited just as much as I was at the first time.'

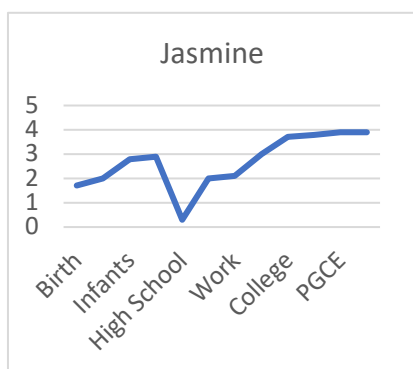
Jasmine values the quality of her higher education, 'if you think about these PGCE courses they don't spend that much time, they can't teach you everything yet on a

Foundation degree you get the whole, you look at the classroom from different perspectives and from every angle whereas on the PGCE you haven't got the time to do that.'

At 2019:

Jasmine qualified as a primary school teacher and was enjoying her third year of teaching.

Satisfaction line:



Jasmine's school experience was tarnished by low teacher expectation and persistent neglect in teacher support identified across her school years. A growth in self-esteem with her accumulated success in HE, despite challenges in career routes through policy change, has led Jasmine to consider herself an ethical teacher and enjoys seeing children develop. The intensity of study and work is significant in her

life.

### Ronnie

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	TA	FDA			BA(Hons) with QTS		Teacher
(4.5 years in HE)							

Ronnie doesn't recall early schooling, rather only later at secondary school and only particular teachers. She feels lucky to have learnt Russian, her teacher was described admiringly as 'flamboyant ... almost Romany Gypsy-like' and she remembers the chemistry lab, 'places and people, rather than the learning ... I must have just absorbed it as I went through.' Ronnie says she was good at maths and did the GCSE early, but didn't stay on at school and left at 16 to get a job. She joined the

Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and got a job in a bank, even though she had really wanted to join the Police. She worked for the bank for twenty-two years (age 16-38) during which time she had two children (2001 and 2004). Her interest in education began when a friend set up a pre-school in 2007 and she began volunteering on her days off (at that time she was working three days a week) and took an NVQ in nursery nursing. This was the first education she had participated in since school, other than a few in-house training sessions with the bank and an accountancy course to help with her husband's business. Ronnie began looking for jobs in educational environments and got a position as a teaching assistant in 2008 at a local school and had stayed throughout her educational career at the same school. Ronnie applied for a few jobs, but this one was local to home and they were taking on six teaching assistants. She said there were two young ones with degrees, but the others were women her age. One of the TAs who already had a degree has now completed her Doctorate, the two younger ones are now teachers after completing their PGCEs and two others were still there as TAs. She noted that seeing the job advertised came up by chance and she did need something near home because of her children being aged 8 and 6.

The school have been very supportive all the way through. Early on, Ronnie enquired at the local college for courses as this was a Junior School and she felt her Nursery Nursing qualification wasn't enough. They advised her not to do another level 3 course and signposted her to the FdA course. At this stage, Ronnie says she wasn't thinking long-term, but wanted to gain more knowledge and confidence for the work she was doing at the time. She identifies as being particular about 'crossing the t's and dotting the i's.'

In 2009 she started the FdA course and recalls the anxiety felt part way through her studies when teacher training policy changed. She had intended on doing the Graduate Teaching Programme (GTP), which was cut.

'I was absolutely devastated at that point because I thought I've done all these years and that policy has changed, that absolutely threw me. I thought, what am I going to do now I can't do it, I'm stuck, it's a waste and what have I done... I was completely devastated.'

The option of an eighteen-month top-up degree at another University (2012-14) emerged. She wanted a course that combined a degree with qualified teacher status, rather than having to do a separate teacher training course. The university was out

of the region and entailed a lot of travelling, but 'you could see the light at the end of the tunnel.' It would have been possible to stay locally, but it would have taken longer. She noted that her peers on the FdA did not have this mobility.

On starting the degree with QTS, the school employed her as an Unqualified Teacher, which meant a £6000 pay rise that helped with the travelling expenses. They also allowed her a half day for travelling and a half day Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time as a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT) would have had. She was able to share a class with a qualified teacher and gradually over the time did more and more in the classroom. Her Infant School placement was at the school next door, so she was able to teach children in year 2 that she then taught again in year 6. Ronnie graduated with a 2:1 degree.

Ronnie started her course before the fees hike.

'I paid for it all myself, erm, but it was, it wasn't anything like studying full-time, it was so much cheaper and I didn't have to pay full fees for anything. My fees were no more than about fifteen hundred pounds a year, that was about the most I ever paid. So, I just paid it as I went along, because I was, I was being paid for my job anyway, erm, so I've got, I didn't have any student debt at all, at the end, I just paid it as I went.'

Ronnie was clear that she went into HE to become a better TA, with no thought of career progression to teacher status, 'I didn't have any thoughts of becoming a teacher at all it was only as I progressed, and I started to kind of analyse what I was actually doing with the children every day that I realised that I could take it a step further and carry on.'

She began to realise there were reasons why children behaved certain ways and why some strategies were more effective for learning. Ronnie recalled that the realisation that knowing how to research enabled sound decisions to be made and it was powerful. She reflected on how she had previously seen a simpler, less nuanced picture, but research-based knowledge enabled positive change. An example given, was in realising that some children needed to be taught to play and playtime was improved by her interventions for all children.

Ronnie had experience in all years of primary education, through placement at an Infant School on the teacher training course and from top to bottom years of the key stage in Juniors. Asking what she thought the school saw in her, she suggested that her empathy with children is strong, '...knowing kind of how children tick'. She

reflected upon how some TAs could become too friendly with the children and that makes a different relationship.

Ronnie reflected on her HE experiences saying she would not have been able to do what she does without it, 'because I wouldn't have been capable'. She says her confidence has only just bloomed after three years as a teacher. She recalled, in the same breath, her previous feeling of failure in not having A-levels and her lack of experience and confidence in writing and that stayed with her for a long time. She acknowledged that she was fairly competent with 'a decent command of the English language'. She recalled the importance of strong academic writing support in her early modules in HE that were crucial and that she liked, since she had been out of education for some time. Ronnie still prefers maths and science subjects and would avoid English if given the choice, she likes a tidy, organised classroom; 'everything in my classroom is labelled and sorted.'

Referring to her own confidence levels, she knows she appears confident but to feel it she needs to really understand, 'be totally convinced ... I don't feel happy unless I fully understand.' It took a while to convince herself that she could do it. Now, she is more confident and says she feels like she can contribute as an equal now. Planning for the whole school or year group still is nerve-wracking. Throughout, her school was supportive. Ronnie emphasises how much she learnt by being in the classroom as she was training and that there's such a lot that happens that can't be taught in a study context.

Ronnie said that her friends and family understood what she needed to do and that it required the extra time and that sometimes she had to miss things. She says the benefits of that have rubbed off onto her son who recognised how hard work pays off, but also it sometimes means forfeiting family time. Mum couldn't always be at sports or after school events. However, Ronnie is certain it has been worth it in terms of career and cost. She was able to do the courses before the fees hike and was able to pay the fees cost off as she trained. She recognises it will not be the same for her children and says her son is looking to do an apprenticeship to avoid debt. They see learning whilst working as the route to take. Ronnie was able to initiate an apprenticeship through a company that visits school. Ronnie says she had both sets of grandparents who helped and that her husband was really supportive of the time it involved, but they couldn't have afforded it if she wasn't working at the same time. It



was a positive experience and investment for her as she sees herself in this job until she retires.

'I know that I did my banking job for twenty years and I'll probably do this for twenty years and then I'll retire, and I have no major hope, aspiration. I like being a teacher and I don't particularly like the look of being a Head or Deputy Head. It's just... I enjoy being with children and it, it frustrates me at times and at times irritates me, but I love doing it, I do like doing it and I wouldn't not like, like to have that contact, so no, I think I'll be quite happy being a teacher until I retire.'

She says it is 'manic' during term time, even now the children are older and can look after themselves, with long hours working, but they can take family holidays together. In regard to her teaching skills, she recognises that maturity, motherhood and her previous career gave her advantages in communicating with parents, peers and children. HE helped with the 'mechanics' of the role, in the ability to research, analyse, justify practice and write, but the 'soft skills' like organising and working with groups were drawn from life experience. The daily work was learnt on the job. Once she is convinced of an approach and can justify it, she is not led away easily by an opposing idea. She recognises her temperament playing a part. She identifies as being strict up to a point, the children know when the line has been crossed, where the boundaries are. She is able to give examples of how she is preparing them for High School in terms of responsibilities and self-efficacy.

'And if any of them say, as an excuse for not having their homework, well my mum... well, no, your mum didn't do anything, you need to check before you leave the house, whether it's in your bag or not ... but my mum ... I don't care if your mum took it out, you put it back in ... they will not have that in six months' time when they go to High School. You have got to take responsibility and so you are going to learn it by hook or by crook this year. So yes, we do an awful lot of work on that.'

Teaching the ten years olds is where she is happiest, though she recognises she may be moved at some stage.

She recalls how her peers at both of the Universities she attended were very similar to her:

'It wasn't very diverse ...I think there was one bloke on the course that I did. There were varying ages, but most of us were working in a school and were married and with a child, or two ... there's a certain type of person that becomes interested in being a teaching assistant and that's partly convenience isn't it? It's easier for you when you've got your own children.'

At 2019:

Ronnie is a class teacher with responsibility for a year 4 trainee doing her final placement.

### **Claudine**

Claudine went to pre-school from age two, but spent a lot of time with her mum, a former factory worker, who cared for her full-time whilst dad was at work. She met friends at pre-school, who she still knows, and hopes her daughter will also go to the same school, with the same teacher. At primary school, her mum says that Claudine didn't like her leaving her and made a big fuss, but she doesn't recall this.

Her mum went back to work when she was at school, but before her sister was born seven years later. She worked evenings and weekends at a large supermarket. Her primary school was a small rural school with only 15 in the class. Claudine remembers loving maths and her maths book; they were regularly tested, and it felt a big transition when they began to use pens. She still remembers writing a poem in the blue ink. The head teachers (there were three during the time she was there) used to read them books. She describes herself as a bit of a tomboy and into cross country running and PE.

Transition to Middle School meant more travel, from being across the road to catching a bus. High School was also a bus journey and Claudine said she began to gain confidence socially. She still loved English, but maths became harder when she didn't take time to really work on it. She admitted in Science to thinking it funny to be sent out of class and feels embarrassment about it now. She always attended school, but it was much more a social occasion. She says her mum used to consistently ask if she was revising and studying but didn't check up 'she thought I was revising, but I wasn't'. Claudine describes her parents as 'not academic'. She was upset when she gained only two English GCSEs (grade Bs), with Ds (including PE) for the rest and E for history; her mum was cross, and she was embarrassed. This meant she did not have the qualifications to progress to college, but because of having a good GCSE English result the college accepted her for a BTEC course in Social Care (2004-6).

Careers support at school was described as 'shocking, they were really bad, they didn't advise me on anything.' Claudine had part-time jobs in waitressing whilst at school and then later worked as a salesperson, which required travel as the retail outlet moved. This meant late night travel and Claudine says she felt unsafe, though she never mentioned it to her parents. She noted that her sister was always taken by car and that she'd never let her daughter do that.

At that stage she knew that she wanted to work with children, but unsure about the full-time care of children. Claudine refers to herself as lacking in confidence, but at the same time acknowledged that she must have had the strength to break away from her friendship group. At the time this was a big deal, she describes her friends saying, 'they were my everything, they were everything to me.' She recognised herself as social and made new friends quickly. She still has contact with school friends. Claudine made a point of choosing a course with work placement and course work, rather than exams. This was a key attraction of the FdA course. Claudine loved the Social Care course and gained Merit in her BTEC. She liked the freedom of longer lunchtimes, whether or not to go to class (though she always attended) and there was a benefit of Educational Needs Allowance of £30 per week, though she says, 'But I would have gone anyway, I've never been someone to not do something', identifying her own tenacity. Claudine had applied for a University course in Social care but wasn't sure that was what she wanted to do and had started to think about teaching. She got a place at two Universities, but not at the local University that she wanted, so she decided not to go as she didn't want to move away. In 2007 Claudine left college and started work three days a week at a private nursery. This was not a good experience because of a bullying issue and it had a detrimental effect on her esteem. Claudine stayed there for eighteen months and left to go full-time to another nursery. Part of the instigation for this was meeting her now husband and their plans to buy a home. This nursery required a level 3 qualification in childcare (not the level 3 social work subject she had) to earn more, so she signed up for a distance learning course in childcare and did it in eight months, which was made possible by council funding of £900. However, on completion, she only got a raise of 5 pence per hour. She didn't want to stay in the childcare area and enquired about a job in a prison working with children in the crèche. She knew of the job through her mum, who was a cleaner there. However, on phoning for information there was also a Learning Support role available, which

Claudine did for four or five years, whilst taking more GCSEs. Claudine taught herself with YouTube videos and took her lower level GCSE Maths alongside the FdA course. It was the same year her sister took her exams, so she also used her revision materials to revise. She paid an administration fee with her former high school to sit the exams. She also re-sat her science with a college and got B grade for each. At the same time, Claudine did a level three Information and Guidance qualification because the unit she was working in was closing and she needed to apply to work in the main prison in a tutor role for women. Whilst working there, she also did a hairdressing, business studies and an ICT qualification as she supported other women in the subjects. Claudine also volunteered at a primary school on her afternoon off.

Claudine began the FdA degree course in 2009. Her employer was supportive in letting her finish early on her course evening class days.

Following the FdA, Claudine chose an alternative route to most of her peers and topped up her degree in Early Years, again looking for a more practically-based option that would support her aim to be a teacher. She had a clear idea of where she wanted to be and at each stage found routes that would lead her in that direction, 'it was all very planned out, but I had to work with what I was given ...but the end goal was there.' For instance, Early Years was not the degree she would have chosen, but a Primary route was not an option. She felt that this was a disadvantage, that options were limited, and that this might hold her back. She had her daughter in 2014, completed the degree top up in the same year, had a year out and with encouragement of her husband went to finish her teacher training on a Schools Direct teaching route: 'full-time, unsalaried ... nightmare!' She had very good advice from the University careers office and selected the Schools Direct route as there was also a possibility of a paid route and, once again, the practical-based emphasis was attractive and that training through schools in a teaching alliance meant she didn't have to travel long distances on placements, as would have been the case on a PGCE. Claudine wrote to twenty schools and got two or three responses and got a local placement through another University.

Claudine did receive a maintenance grant of just above £300 but went into debt paying for full-time childcare costs as both her parents and husband worked full-time too. She was reluctant to do this when her daughter was so young, but also recognised that they may want another child and the time was now. She said it was

the hardest thing she had ever done, 'I understand why people didn't finish the course, because if you're not a hundred percent, you've got to be committed to wanting to teach and if you're not, then you wouldn't, you'd just leave it.' Claudine also said it was a brilliant course, though didn't feel supported all the time by the University.

There was an option to continue to do a Masters module (for £50) following the course, but Claudine wanted to spend time with her daughter. In 2016 she got her first teaching job as a year 2 teacher in one of the placement schools that had a supportive team. Claudine had not started her maternity leave at interview and she had asked to go back part-time afterwards, 'or I'll be an emotional wreck!'

Her husband has had a similar route to her in returning to education to top up qualifications to a degree. She already has longer term plans to return to complete a Masters, but the timing isn't right just yet. She still has a lot to learn in the job and that's keeping her busy. However, in the long term she would like to consider teaching/guest speaking in higher education.

Claudine says she continually reflects on her past and current practice and that has made her more insightful as a teacher and parent. She compares herself favourably to a peer teacher, also newly qualified, in terms of her empathy and relationship with children.

Claudine's key drivers were to learn through life experience, have a salary, house and children and doesn't think it would have been possible had she done a degree on leaving college. She said the work and study was really hard, but she would probably still be working in a nursery if she hadn't done it, which was definitely not what she wanted and she says she would have been frustrated. 'I suppose I thrive from that challenge of achieving. Maybe it was because I needed to prove to myself that I can achieve, because I didn't here [at GCSEs].

Claudine identifies behaviour management as a strength because of her experiences supporting in the prison and teaches children to be engaged and love the subjects. She was clear that she wanted to teach rather than 'babysit', as she had felt was the case on placement, and proactively chose a school that would allow that. Claudine gave specific examples of praise from observations of her practice - differentiation, engagement, making learning fun, all linked to reflection on her own challenges in education, her work experiences and having new knowledge from theory.

Claudine says she couldn't have done it without her family, her husband, her parents and sister all helping with the children. She admires her parents who have paid off their mortgage, brought up two children and worked hard. She reminded me, 'my parents aren't academic, but they still managed to do it'. She says her mum says she wished she'd gone into a profession instead of cleaning. Her mum has applied to do other administrative roles, but not succeeded. On one occasion her mother applied for an office job in the place she had worked for ten years, but it was filled by a psychology graduate who stayed for 12 months. Claudine says her mum doesn't have the sort of nerves she has, and she didn't apply again.

Claudine now says that she is 'very happy with where I am now, yeah. I feel fulfilled, like I have been able to achieve and do something. I feel probably the most settled that I've ever felt, because I feel like I'm not fighting against stuff, I've got it, so I can relax a bit now.' It's not all about income either, 'erm, obviously I'm not in this profession for the salary because I was earning just a thousand pound less here [points to graph] and I worked thirty-seven and a half hours a week and I dread to think what I work here... The end motivation was me wanting to be a teacher, not money ... it's not as if I'm earning a massive amount and I don't think I ever will to be honest, I'll have to leave that up to [my husband]!' Claudine is hopeful that she is a positive role model for her children.

At 2019:

Claudine completed her full-time PGCE and worked for one year at an FE College as a Maths teacher. She left due to 'excessive workload and pressure' and got a job as a job coach at a specialist SEND college, reviving her love for teaching, and now is on the teaching team. She has plans to extend her work to her own small business teaching adults in a new practical subject area.

Example email for missing information.

**Jane Wormald**

My doctoral work

To: [REDACTED]

28 January 2019 at 13:17

J

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Dear [REDACTED]

I hope this finds you well?

I am progressing well with my Doctoral work now and have lots of information that I can parallel with educational policy. There's some missing information that I'd like to fill in, if you could help me with that? If you could, that would be really helpful.

What GCSEs did you get at school (subject, year)?  
What is your current job title?

I had thought I would need to speak to you again, but my Supervisor thinks I have plenty of data already!

Thank you for being so articulate and generous in your interviews.

How are you doing?

Best wishes  
Jane

[REDACTED]

Re: My doctoral work

To: Jane Wormald

28 January 2019 at 20:14

J

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Hi Jane,

Great to hear from you, how are you?

All is well with me. I've branched out from primary into HE and currently working at the University of [REDACTED] and loving it. I decided not to pursue teaching as it as just awful watching the pressure our teaching staff were under and I felt I had reached as far as I could within the remit of my support role and I was working so many hours of my own time, evenings and weekends I decided to reassess my priorities. I needed a change so finally left the school I'd been at for 10 years and took a student support role for the University of [REDACTED]. I was there for a year and then saw my current position and went for it. I'm still relatively new to the role so learning lots, but I love it. My current job title is Student Education Services Officer (Assessment).

As far as GCSEs

- English Language B
- English Literature B
- Drama A
- Mathematics C
- Science D

## Examples of transcriptions

*Interview Ronnie.*

I: So, do you remember your first experience of education, schooling, or influence?

R: I don't really remember, erm, Primary School. I remember where I went, I can picture the building, but I don't particularly remember any experiences. Erm, it was more really when I got to Secondary School, I remember particular teachers. I remember a languages teacher, because I, I learnt Russian at School, which was unusual, so I remember her, she was very sort of a flamboyant Russian woman, Eastern European lady and so I remember kind of the clothes she used to wear and things, she was very kind of, almost Romany Gypsy like, she was really [I: oh yeah, yeah, really flamboyant [I: quite traditional] yeah. Erm, so I remember certain people, I remember certain things. Like I remember chemistry experiments and things like that. I remember the Laboratories. I remember places and, and people, rather than kind of [I: learning] learning, yeah. Kind of, I must have just absorbed it as, as I went through. Erm, I remember maths particularly, I did maths early, I was quite, I was quite good at maths. Erm, but I, I decided not to stay on at School, I finished when I was sixteen and went straight to work [I: right], erm, because I got onto a Youth Training Scheme, erm, in a Building Society, err, Nationwide [I: oh right, okay, yeah]. Erm, I'd always wanted to be a police officer, really, I don't know why, but then I decided to go and work in a bank [I: oh right]. Erm, and I actually worked there for twenty-two years. So, I worked, I worked at Nationwide from being sixteen to being, yeah, thirty-eight. In fact, did I work there longer? Maybe I worked there longer. Maybe it was twenty-two years after the Training Scheme, but it was that kind of age, because by this point, I'd had two children, erm, oh yeah, that's right, yeah, so in this, in this middle section I've had two children.

I: Let's take this out here then, because we might need something in the middle here [R: yeah]. So, you had two children.

R: So there's two children, I had, I had my son when I was thirty one and I had my daughter when I was thirty four and its, it's my daughter really that's triggered my change in occupation, because my friend, erm, set up a Pre-School and I went to help at the Pre-School on my days off, because I used to work three days a week and then I went into the Pre-School two days a week to help, because it was a new venture and [I: I did a similar thing actually, yeah] yeah and she, erm, got some funding, because it was a new venture, she got some funding and I did, erm, an NVQ in Nursery Nursing, because I was going there and volunteering anyway and that was my, my first thing that I did. That was really my first education that I did after [I: School] School. I did sort of in-house things, yeah in-house training and I'd done a bit of, erm, Accountancy type stuff, because my husband was self-employed. But I hadn't really done any, so that was all sort of in-house training and, and bookkeeping kind of, that kind of thing. Erm, but this, this was really the start. So, this was when xxxx [I: when would this], xxxx was born in 2004 and xxxx was born in 2001. So, it was when she was about three, erm, that I started, that I did this. So, this will have been about 2007. Erm, and it was really when I'd done that, that I then thought I could do this and that's when I then started looking around for jobs and I got a job here [I: oh did you?] as a teaching assistant and I've been here ever since.



*Interview Josie*

I: And were you working full or part time?

R: Working part time and then I ended up, when, was it [I: oh and you got married here as well], yeah, I got married and then I'm trying to work out at what point I started, xxxx was at Nursery, so he'd be about three, maybe four. So I thought oh I'd quite like, I used to go in and just help and I thought oh I quite like this Education thing.

I: So, you used to go and help at the...

R: At xxxx's Nursery, at xxxx.

I: At Nursery, mmm, is xxxx in that area as well? [R: yeah ,yeah] I don't know it very well.

R: Yeah, yeah, sorry, yeah, so erm, like I worked there and then a Course came up for a Nursery Assistant [I: oh yeah], so I joined that.

I: Where was that?

R: It was in the next village, in xxxx, it was like the, erm, you know like a Community Centre sort of thing that ran Courses. So it was, the end game was to be able, that it would lead me to be able to work as, not as a full Nursery Nurse, but as a Nursery Assistant and I think it was CACHE, its non-existent, I don't think anymore.

I: Yeah, but I know, I know of it, yeah.

R: Yeah, so it was that that I did, so I did that and then continued...

I: Did you do it while you were still working [R: no] or you'd finished that.

R: I'd finished that, so I finished working and decided to go down this route and did this.

I: So that will have been about 2000, was it?

R: Yeah, and did that and, but still helped voluntarily in the Nursery, because you had to do so many hours volunteering, erm and then I completed that and I ended up eventually getting a job as a teaching assistant, at xxxx, working in a Year Two Class.

I: In where, sorry?

R: At xxxx [I: the same place, yeah], the same School, yeah, in a Year Two Class, erm, and that was about twelve year ago.

I: Does that all add up now then? It should do, shouldn't it, so.

R: Yeah, so there would have been a gap between this and this, so this, it was twelve [I: so we're 2017, 2005] yeah.

I: Okay, so you were a TA at that point, you'd done your Nursery, so how come you went from Nursery Assistant to Year Two?

R: Because what happened was there was, there was no, they knew, at this point, I was obviously actively looking for a role in Education and there was nothing available here and I'd looked at, I'd been for interviews at other Schools and then someone came and said well actually we are looking for a teaching assistant in Year Two and we think you'd be quite good at that [I: so it was an opportunity that came long, yeah], it was another opportunity. In between that as well, let me think where it fits now, I also did a Course that was called Helping in Schools and I think it [I: when did you do that Course?] oh let me think, it might have been after, you know between this and this here somewhere, I can't give you a definite date [I: somewhere around that time] yeah and the idea was that, as well, I think it was a government sort of initiative and it was, it was aimed at, I think, parents being more involved in their child's education and because they knew I'd sort of done this sort of thing.

## Appendix 6

### Section of participants' timelines alongside relevant policy.

Participant	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Labour Government - Tony Blair													Gordon Brown		Lib/Con Coalition Gov. David Cameron			Con. Gov. David Cameron		Theresa May					
1996 Education (Student Loans) Act - Sec of State allowed to subsidise private	2001 SENDA												2003 Workforce remodelling - 3yr initiative to reduce teachers' workload with classroom		2010 Tripling of uni tuition fees			2013 Introduction of School Direct		Tuition fees frozen temporarily at £9,250					
1998 National Childcare Strategy													2004 HE Act. Universities could charge fees up to £3000/annum from 2006		2011 Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to SEN			2015 Fees repayment freeze at £21000							
1998 Teaching and HE Act - fees introduced up to £1000/annum,abolished maintenance	2004 Children Act (Every Child Matters)												HE Fees rise to £3225		2011 DfE Training our next generation of outstanding teachers.			2015 Fees repayment freeze at £21000							
1997 Dearing Report	Foundation Degrees launch 2003 Green paper Widening participation in HE												2006 -11 Registered Teacher Programme		2011 End of RTP			2012 CESG Great Teachers: Attracting, training and retaining the best		2016/17 planned end of means tested grants for HE					
	Graduate Teacher Programme incl QTS whilst working												2006 Top-up fees effect applications to University		2012 CESG Great Teachers: Attracting, training and retaining the best			2016/17 planned end of means tested grants for HE							
	Student loan repayment base rate +1%														2012 End of GTP			2012 New £3000/annum fees begin + RPI+3% interest on student loans							
TA													CD		BA(Hons)			PGCE		Teacher					
													TA		EF			BA(Hons)		Teacher					
													TA		GH			BA(Hons)							
													TA		IJ			PGCE		Teacher					
													TA		KL			BA(Hons)		PGCE					
													TA		MN			BA(Hons) + TA		PGCE					
													TA		OP			BA(Hons)		PGCE					
													TA		QR			BA(Hons) with QTS		Teacher					
													TA		ST			BA(Hons)		PGCE					

### Section of mapped policy across time.

Participant	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017							
Gillian Shephard													Tony Blair		David Cameron			David Cameron		David Cameron		David Cameron		David Cameron		David Cameron		David Cameron				
David Blunkett													Estelle Mor		Charles Clarke			Ruth Kelly		Alan Johnson			Ed Balls/John Denham		Michael Gove		Nicky Morgan		David Cam		Theresa May	
1997 Kennedy Report	Learning Works: Widening participation in Further Education												2007 DFES to DCPS & DIUS			2010 SATs quarter of primary schools boycotted tests		2016 Green Paper														
1997 Dearing Report Higher Education in the learning society- 3rd review - recommended wider participation in HE													2007 CESC Report Sustainable Sch; 2010 Academies Bill - attempt to speed up			2016 Green Paper																
1997 DfE Circular Teaching: High status, high standards - ITT requirements.													2007 Faith in the System - tackling			2010 Scrapping of Building Schools for the Future programme		2016 NAO Findings														
1997 White paper Excellence in Schools													2007 CPAC The Academies Program			2010 Academies Act - for rapid expansion		2017														
1997 FE and Training Act													2010 Browne Review			Securing a Sustainable Future for HE - recommendations largely accepted		2017														
1997 QAA for HE estab.													2007 Conservative Party Raising the Standards			2010 White paper The importance of teaching		2017														
1997 Green paper Excellence for all children: Meeting SEN - 5 year plan													2007 The Children's plan: Building the Future			2010 HE Tripling of university tuition fees.		2017														
1998 Education (Student Loans) Act - Student loans to private sector													2008 CSFC Testing and Assessment			2011 Education Bill - proposed abolition of GTCE, TDAS and more		2017														
1998 CESC Report Disaffected Children report with recommendations 14-19 yr olds													2008 SATs fiasco			2011 CESC Behaviour and Discipline in Schools report		2017														
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 BEW Review			Independent Review of Key Stage 2 testing, assessment and marking		2017														
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 Tickell Review			The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning		2017														
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special education			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 Wolf Review			Vocational education		2017														
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 National Strategies 1997-2011 - Impact of National Strategies			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 SEN Act Amendment			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 White Paper HE: Students at the heart of the system - DBIS			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 CESC The English Baccalaureate - report warning of little support for good practice			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 APPGE Report of the inquiry into overcoming the barriers to literacy - 2011			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 NUT/NCSL Successful leaders: 2011 Teachers' Standards for Sept 2012			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 Cabinet Office Strategy Unit: 2011 CESC Participation by 16-19 year olds in education and training - report			2017																
2008 National Challenge by Ed Ball													2011 DfE Training our next generation of outstanding teachers. Introduction of			2017																

### Josie's charted profile.

Participant	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Labour Government - Tony Blair													Gordon Brown		Lib/Con Coalition Gov. David Cameron			Con. Gov. David Cameron		Theresa May		
1996 Education (Student Loans) Act - Sec of State allowed to subsidise private	2001 SENDA												2003 Workforce remodelling - 3yr initiative to reduce teachers' workload with classroom		2010 Tripling of uni tuition fees			2013 Introduction of School Direct		Tuition fees frozen		
1998 National Childcare Strategy													2004 HE Act. Universities could charge fees up to £3000/annum from 2006		2011 Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to SEN			2015 Fees repayment freeze at £21000				
1998 Teaching and HE Act - fees introduced up to £1000/annum,abolished maintenance	2004 Children Act (Every Child Matters)												HE Fees rise to £3225		2011 DfE Training our next generation of outstanding teachers.			2015 Fees repayment freeze at £21000				
1997 Dearing Report	Foundation Degrees launch 2003 Green paper Widening participation in HE												2006 -11 Registered Teacher Programme		2011 End of RTP			2012 CESG Great Teachers: Attracting, training and retaining the best		2016/17 planned end of means tested grants for HE		
	Graduate Teacher Programme incl QTS whilst working												2006 Top-up fees effect applications to University		2012 CESG Great Teachers: Attracting, training and retaining the best			2016/17 planned end of means tested grants for HE				
	Student loan repayment base rate +1%														2012 End of GTP			2012 New £3000/annum fees begin + RPI+3% interest on student loans				
(Left school 1990)													Nursery assistant course		BA(Hons)			PGCE		Teacher		
Child 1991; 1996	CACHE course																					
Born 1974	Helping in Schools' course																					
	Volunteered in School																					